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Cabinet revolt fear after Blunkett memo

Blair to take command of benefit reform

By Philip Webster, Political Editor

TONY BLAIR faced down the threat of Cabinet revolt and party mutiny yesterday as he took charge of moves to reform the welfare state and declared that there was no alternative to change.

The Prime Minister, rocked by the disclosure of a devastating attack by David Blunkett, the Education Secretary, on proposals to cut disability benefits, said the system was not working and reforming it would be "the objective of the whole Government".

He staged an impromptu press conference as he arrived to watch a football match, telling reporters: "We will do it fairly, we will do it sensitively, but we will do it."

It was clear last night that Mr Blair had turned the battle to shake up the welfare state into a campaign similar to the one in which he persuaded the Labour party to drop Clause IV. Some ministers were even comparing it to Margaret Thatcher's fight with the Tory Cabinet "wets" in the early 1980s.

He has decided to chair a new ministerial group on welfare reform, taking overall control of a process which until now has been headed by Gordon Brown, the Chancellor.

He is taking charge both to assure anxious colleagues that the review is not a Treasury-driven cuts exercise and also to stake his whole authority as leader and Prime Minister on pushing the package through.

He seems to be ready for trouble. In a *Newweek* interview released today Mr Blair says: "I'll get a lot rougher than this. I've always said this to people - if we don't hit rough times we are not doing our job."

An embarrassed Mr Blunkett, whose letter to Mr Brown voicing



his "grave anxiety" at aspects of proposals for disabled benefit changes, presented himself in interviews yesterday as one of the leading advocates of welfare reform. He spoke of constituents who were "sick and tired" of seeing people who were not in work being better off than those who were. He denied there was a rift, saying: "I think that all of us have got the same objectives, the principles spelt out by Tony Blair."

He was felt by government officials to have made the best of a bad job. But the damage caused by the revelation of his outspoken opposition to a central plank of the review plans was huge because it exposed for the first time the full extent of Cabinet worries. It also confirmed the fears of disabled groups that proposals to cut, tax or means-test their benefits are under active consideration.

Mr Blunkett, who is blind, voiced

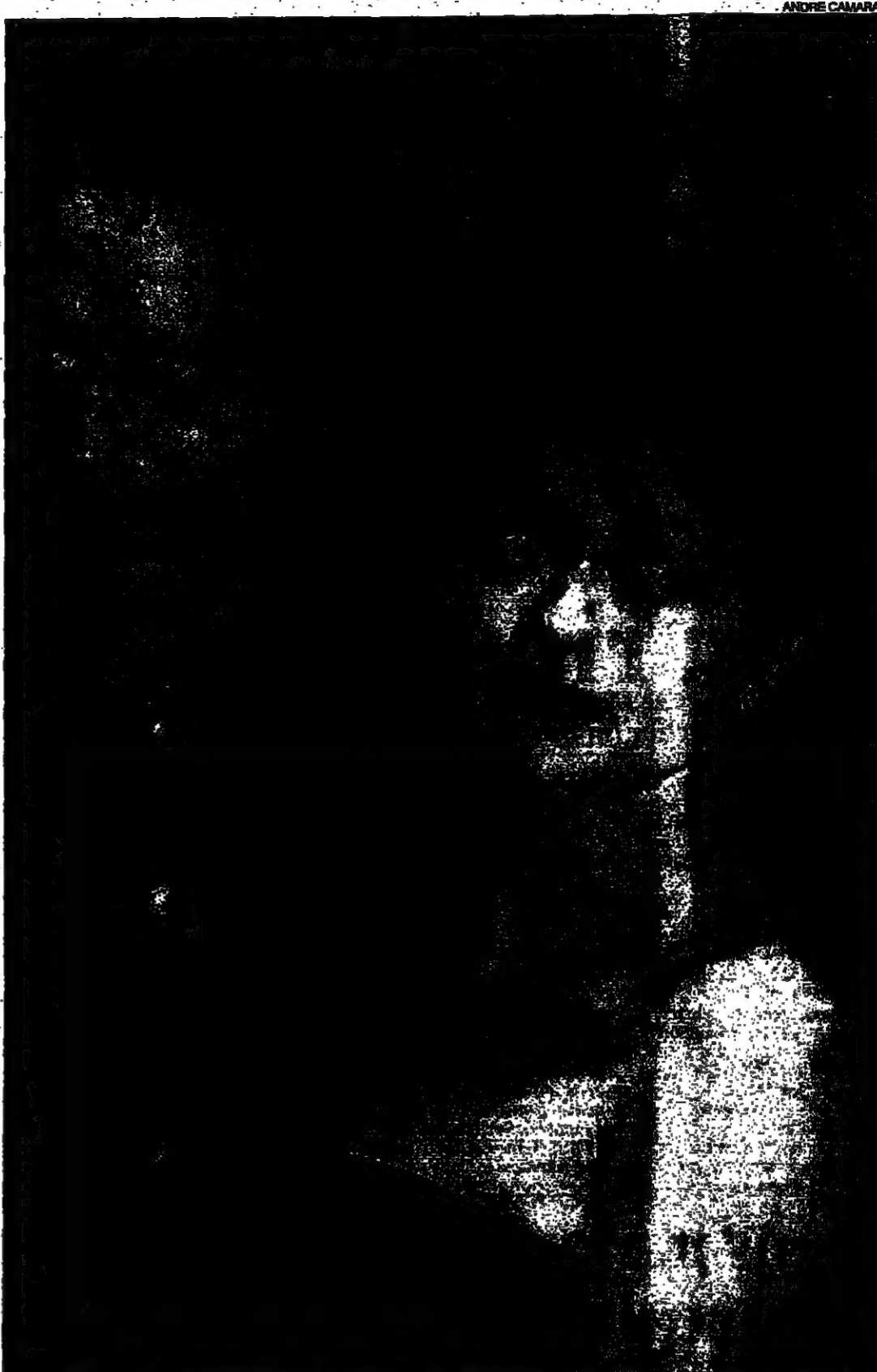
strong objections to taxing or means-testing disability living allowance, said that handing responsibility for paying the benefit to local authority social service departments would be a recipe for confusion and impoverishment. He warned of a future revolt if the Government abolished industrial injuries benefits for existing claimants, and warned that switching from National Insurance-based benefits to more means-testing would undermine social cohesion.

Although he protested yesterday that the proposals had come from officials and not ministers, the fact that he sent his letter to Mr Brown spoke volumes. All those ideas have been floated in recent weeks by both ministers and officials and Mr Blunkett clearly feared that they had the support of Mr Brown and Alistair Darling, his Chief Secretary.

The leak of the Blunkett letter on Saturday night overshadowed a speech by Mr Blair in his constituency in which he said there was no choice but to reform the benefit system. "If we don't, we fail the people we have to help," he said. Yesterday he added: "A welfare state that is... costing more than we spend on schools, hospitals and police... put together while more people live in poverty is not a welfare state that is delivering fairness or efficiency."

He added: "I intend to lead the debate. I intend to be at the forefront, driving it forward, making sure that the changes we make are consistent with our principle of social justice and fairness."

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Helena Bonham Carter and Linus Roache at a London screening of *The Wings of the Dove*, Page 18

Oxbridge prepares to charge fees of £4,000

By John O'Leary, Education Editor

OXBRIDGE bursars are prepared to forgo £35 million in state support and charge students fees of up to £4,000 a year if a government review of their funding threatens their colleges' independence.

The two universities have until January 5 to put the case for retaining their existing support, paid direct to the colleges by the state. The colleges fear that they will be expected to survive on a reduced amount paid through the universities, making their income less secure and altering the power structure in Oxford and Cambridge.

Under alternative proposals discussed by Cambridge's fees committee last Friday, the colleges would waive their right to state support and collect fees, which currently stand at £2,700, from their students. A bursary scheme would ensure that poor applicants were not excluded.

Andrew Murrison, the bursar of Peterhouse and architect of the plan, said: "Many of us believe that the mechanism is as important as the amount of money we receive because the loss of direct funding could mean that in five to ten years Oxbridge was unrecognisable from what we see today. Any semblance of independence would go out of the window and the colleges would become no more than halls of residence."

Oxford and Cambridge argue that college life and the individual or small-group tuition culture it allows are the key to their excellence. The universities are still hoping that they would be offered a fees package that they could accept before the end of next month, but the Cambridge bursars are anxious to have a fall-back position.

Astronomer says we are in 2009

Jesus Christ was born 12 years earlier than is believed, according to a leading Italian astronomer. We are therefore in the last days of 2009.

Professor Giovanni Baratta says he has found new evidence from Roman history, the Bible and astronomy which "does not affect belief in Christ's divinity, but does affect calendars". Page 11

Saddam warned

America will urge the UN Security Council to warn Saddam Hussein that barring UN inspectors from his palace is unacceptable. Page 13

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Idling drivers face fines

By Nick Nuttall, Environment Correspondent

DRIVERS who leave vehicle engines idling at the kerb may be fined under new Scandinavian-style anti-smog laws to be unveiled next month.

Parking wardens and the police will be given the power to fine people £20 for running engines while parked at the roadside, in lay-bys and at taxi ranks - although no specific time limit has been set.

Ministers want to tackle flagrant offenders, but in theory anyone who stops with their engine running could be at risk. The Department of the Environment, Transport and the Regions (DETR) said the regulations would come into force next month. It was expected that wardens would have discretion over who to fine.

Coaches with passengers on board on days when heating or air conditioning units were

needed are not the target. But a lone coach driver who kept his engine running while awaiting his passengers could expect to be targeted.

The spokesman said "buses on turn-around", where drivers often sit idling the engine for up to 15 minutes would be liable, as would taxis at ranks.

Chris Cawley, assistant director of pollution at Westminster City Council, which has played a key role in securing the laws, said parking wardens would be advised to warn offending drivers. Those who persisted would be issued with a ticket.

Mr Cawley said cities would crack down on notorious places such as Victoria and Park Lane in central London, where coaches, cars and other vehicles often parked with engines running. There would be exemptions, such as deliv-

ery vans that need the power to operate tail gates and older ice-cream vans that have to keep freezers working.

Westminster would use signs and leaflets to alert drivers and companies.

Motoring organisations fear drivers in congested streets may also be fined, but the department said that would be beyond the spirit of the law. "But clearly if it looks as if the traffic is not going to move for some time, we would expect people to turn off engines," the spokesman said.

Leaving a car unattended with the engine running is already an offence.

Other regulations will empower local authorities to fine owners of vehicles breaking emissions standards. Now only Vehicle Inspectorate staff can stop and test a vehicle and issue fines.

Carey's joke falls flat in Asda's aisles

By Ruth Gledhill, Religion Correspondent

NO-ONE laughed on the Isle of Dogs when the Archbishop of Canterbury told his joke about the Christmas banner which should have read: "Glory to God in the Highest." The letter "e" had been dropped out of "highest", making it "Glory to God in the High st."

Dr George Carey's message was being broadcast to all the 216 Asda supermarkets in the land as the highlight of a 40-minute carol service celebrated at the Gravesend store in Kent.

But at the store in the Isle of Dogs - where Santa's grotto was empty and shopping baskets were full - someone appeared to have decided that God and Marston might be better left apart. The volume of Asda FM, the in-store radio,

which had earlier emitted perfectly audible versions of *So this is Christmas* and *Santa Claus is coming to town*, had been turned so low that Dr Carey's words of wisdom were barely audible.

"So the good news of Jesus is for everyone, shoppers as well as worshippers," said Dr Carey, according to the text released to journalists in advance. "If we all work to show God's glory and love in the High Street, our society and this world will surely be a better place."

About one million people turn out to shop in Asda stores on the Sunday before Christmas, only slightly fewer than the number expected to attend the Church of England on the same day.

Nation remembers Princess with names of her sons

By Helen Rumbelow

WILLIAM and Harry have rocketed in popularity among readers of *The Times* as names for boys in the wake of the death of Diana, Princess of Wales. But Charles has declined dramatically following the death of the Prince's former wife.

Top spot for girls over the year in a survey of nearly 4,000 birth announcements in the newspaper is Olivia. James retains first place among boys.

As the nation mourned the Princess in September new parents named their baby boys after her elder son.

The frequency with which William appears in the birth columns in September is dou-

ble that in any previous month helping to take the name from third place last year to second in the table this year.

Harry, similarly, is up by a third in September but, conversely, the appearances of Charles drop by a third over the same period.

Over the year, Charles was well-favoured, rising four places on last year. Diana's christian name is nothing like as popular as she was herself, appearing just once in the lists, back in the spring.

As well as Harry - which taken together with Henry would have knocked William out of second place - there is clearly much informality about. Jack makes a new appearance and Emma and Isobel rise several places

TOP TEN NAMES 1997

BOYS	GIRLS
1 JAMES (1)	1 OLIVIA (1)
2 WILLIAM (9)	2 EMMA (1)
3 ALEXANDER (4)	3 SOPHIE (4)
4 THOMAS (2)	4 ISOBEL (1)
5 EDWARD (9)	5 EMMA (1)
6 CHARLES (10)	6 LUCY (1)
7 OLIVER (9)	7 CHARLOTTE (9)
8 GEORGE (5)	8 EMILY (9)
9 HARRY (8)	9 ISABELLA (10)
10 BENJAMIN (JACK) (=)	10 ALEXANDRA (1)

above last year's Emily and Isabella.

The rise of Olivia is intriguing since it has been rare for most of this century, only beginning to boom in the eighties, according to the Register's General Index of Births.

It began to climb up *The Times* lists in the nineties, at fifth in 1994 and second last year.

Deriving from the word "olive", it was first popularised in 1600 by William Shakespeare in *Twelfth Night*, in which Olivia is a

wealthy widow wooed by a rich Duke.

The dainty Hollywood star Olivia de Havilland made her name as a dutiful wife in *Come With The Wind*, and in 1978 Olivia Newton-John was wooed by an altogether less glamorous John Travolta in the film *Grease*.

The name is, like most others on the list, seen as an aspirational choice for parents who want to confer pedigree on their children.

"It's done by parents who want to make sure their children are in a social class above them," said Leslie Dunkling, editor of the *Guinness Book of Names*, "so names in *The Times* list often appear in the national lists a few years later."

All of
 Beethoven's
 Symphonies
 in the palm
 of your hand.

مكتبة الأمل



A boy peering through the police lines outside the Church of Our Lady in Harryville at the weekend. The RUC has called for an end to the 16-month protest by loyalists

Sectarian ritual costs RUC £2m

Martin Fletcher on the weekly intimidation of churchgoing Catholics

TWO hundred Roman Catholics went to the Church of Our Lady in Harryville, Ballymena, at the weekend for the last Saturday night Mass before Christmas. So did three dozen Protestants, inspired by sectarian hatred.

The Catholics went to worship. The others — hardcore loyalist thugs — went to intimidate them, as they have every Saturday night for the past 16 months. The RUC was once again obliged to ring the paint-spattered church with armoured grey Land Rovers and at least 100 officers.

Last week, Superintendent Roger McCallum, Ballymena's RUC commander, said that the bill for policing the ritual had reached £2 million. More than 50 officers had

been injured and 44 people arrested. He appealed for an end to it so that his officers could be put to more profitable use — an appeal greeted with contempt.

The protests began in the summer of 1996 when Orangemen were stopped from parading in a Protestant church in the overwhelmingly nationalist village of Dunloy, 10 miles away. Loyalists sought a suitable target for retaliation and settled on the Church of Our Lady, an angular edifice built 30 years ago in the middle of a predominantly Protestant estate.

In the early months the protests were violent: as many

as 500 loyalists would gather to wave banners and scream obscenities at the churchgoers. Petrol bombs, rocks and missiles were hurled at the church. It survived an arson attack, but its elderly priest was forced to move from the fortified parochial house next door after his car was burnt and a breezeblock smashed through his study window. Three RUC officers had to move after their homes were petrol-bombed.

The violence has settled into a war of attrition. Only 30 or 40 turn up regularly, although their numbers swell considerably when events elsewhere in Northern Ireland inflame sectarian tensions.

They are corralled at one end of the graffiti-daubed street outside the church and are arrested if they shout obscenities. But their mere presence necessitates a huge police operation each week and creates the most oppressive conditions for worship.

The protesters are a surly, aggressive bunch. They include women, and children being reared in the same climate of hate in which their parents have spent their lives. No one admits being the ringleader. None will give their name. "Got any matches?" said one young man when asked if he wanted to

see the church closed. They have convinced themselves that they are victims, not aggressors, and that Catholics from across the province are now swarming to the church each Saturday simply to provoke them. "Until the Orangemen walk in Dunloy, this protest goes on," declared one burly fellow, and his colleagues cheered.

Outside the church doors, half-a-dozen other Protestants stage a vigil each Saturday night to support their Catholic brethren. Inside, the priest — four now serve the church in rotation — says a prayer for the protesters at the start of services. As a conciliatory

gesture, the church cancelled the Masses for ten weeks during last summer's marching season, but to no avail.

The priests no longer speak to the media lest they inflame the situation. A few of the congregation have been frightened off, but not many. "There's a dogged dignity about the people," said Nuala O'Loan, whose husband's car was attacked by the protesters as he left the church last year. "They have never retaliated. They have come and gone, even though people have shouted the most vile obscenities."

Of the protests she said: "I think it's very sad. They are achieving nothing, and they're wasting appalling sums of money."

Labour plans majority of elected members in replacement Lords

By Philip Webster, Political Editor

AN ELECTED chamber of 200 members, with a further 100 being appointed, could replace the House of Lords.

Tony Blair has asked Lord Irvine of Lairg, the Lord Chancellor, to oversee the abolition of the rights of hereditary peers to sit and vote in the Lords by 1999.

But a new Cabinet committee known as CRP (HL), which Lord Irvine will chair and which will begin work next month, is to go much further

and will decide whether Britain should have an elected second chamber with enhanced powers, and how it would be chosen.

Mr Blair's decision to push ahead with reform will be seen as an attempt by the Government to restore its radical credentials with party activists unhappy over benefit cuts.

The committee will also include Jack Straw, the Home Secretary, Ann Taylor, the Leader of the Commons, Lord

Richard, Leader of the Lords, Peter Mandelson, Minister without Portfolio, and Nick Brown and Lord Carter, Chief Whips of the Commons and the Lords.

It is expected that a Bill to strip the 638 hereditary peers of their voting rights will be included in the next session of Parliament. But senior ministers believe that the Government should give its reform greater force and public support by outlining its plan for a

replacement for the Lords. There appears to be growing support for a second chamber combining a majority of elected members but with a quarter or a third nominated, as life peers are.

Some ministers want the chamber to be called the Senate, with senators taking the place of peers. But it would have a strong independent element, achieved by appointing many who are now crossbench peers.

Dome seeks Hirst and Hockney aid

By Damian Whitworth

DAVID HOCKNEY and Damien Hirst are being sought by the creators of the Millennium Dome in Greenwich to inject their artistic vision into the £750 million project, which has been criticised for the secrecy surrounding its likely contents.

"We are very keen that there is a celebration of British art and that the visual dressing of the interior of the dome has contributions from our greatest artists," said a spokesman

for the New Millennium Experience last night.

Around a central amphitheatre the dome will be divided into nine exhibition areas covering three themes: Mind, Body and Spirit; What We Do, which will focus on the past, present and future of culture and probably include demonstrations of a new game, surfball; and Where We Live, which will examine our local, national and international environments.

Stockbroker's Thai wife 'had him killed'

A British stockbroker who allegedly cheated his Thai wife, Nongnut Tungkaburi, out of takings from her holiday island bar was murdered by contract with his own Samurai sword, Thai police said yesterday. Roger Jennings, 56, from Wycombe, Buckinghamshire, was stabbed ten times with a knife and the sword from his own collection, after his wife had issued a £2,600 murder contract on the southern island of Phuket. She has confessed to conspiracy to murder after a three-day interrogation at Phuket police station, Phuket, according to Colonel Koldat Wongvorachart.

Drug-assault arrest

A 19-year-old man was questioned yesterday after a girl of 12 was dragged from a bus stop, drugged and sexually assaulted. The girl was found by police. After regaining consciousness she had run barefoot across a motorway. Manchester police are waiting for chemical analysis of the contents of a bottle found near by. There was speculation that it might have contained Rohypnol, the so-called "date rape drug".

Girl power takes top slot

The Spice Girls have hit the Christmas No 1 spot for the second year running, beating the tribute single to Diana, Princess of Wales. Their single *Too Much* knocked the Teletubbies *Say Eh-Oh!* off the top. The Chicken Shed Theatre Company's tribute *I'm In Love With the World* could manage only fifteenth position. Last Christmas the Spice Girls had the No 1 with *2 Become 1*. William Hill is offering odds of 10-1 on them repeating the feat next year.

Smartcard revolution

The Government aims to deliver at least a quarter of its services electronically within the next five years, under a White Paper to be unveiled next year. "Smartcards" and digital technology, run by the Government and banks, would enable people to undertake a range of tasks from their homes and in shops, including collecting benefit, paying parking fines and renewing car tax and driving licences, a Cabinet Office spokesman said.

Legal aid fraud charges

Tim Robinson, 54, who defended "road-rage" killer Tracey Andrews, and ten of his former staff are accused of conspiring to defraud the Legal Aid Board. Mr Robinson is alleged to have been involved in a plot to submit false claims for legal aid payment. Other members of his former firm also charged are Paul Smith, Richard Hill, Howard Banton, Margaret Leith, Clive Randall, Gerald Davies, Patrick Price, Christine Noble and Keith Pengelly.

Lockerbie trial plea

Relatives of victims of the Lockerbie air disaster marked its ninth anniversary by intensifying their demands that the two Libyan suspects be brought to trial. Families of the 270 people who died when the Pan-Am jumbo jet exploded over Lockerbie in Scotland on December 21, 1988, launched a petition in Edinburgh for the two to be tried under Scottish law in a neutral country by an international panel of judges, chaired by a senior Scottish judge.

Faults found in lifeboats

Fourteen lifeboats have been withdrawn from service after a major fault developed in their new American-made engines. Just months after completing a £1.1 million refit, the boats are being examined by technicians from Detroit Diesels after engine cylinder seizures. Old relief boats are standing in. The Royal National Lifeboat Institution said: "Our call-outs will not be compromised at all, and we hope the fault will be sorted out by February."

Raid on fakes nets £1.3m

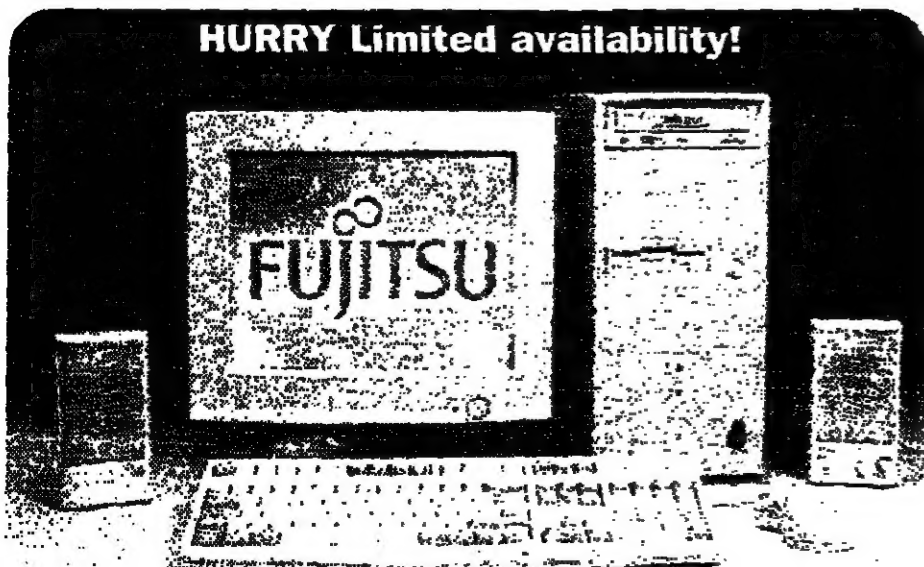
Counterfeit clothing, compact discs and computer equipment worth more than £1.3 million has been seized at the Barras market in Glasgow. Fourteen people, aged 16 to 43, have been reported to the Procurator Fiscal after the two-day operation by Strathclyde Police and trading standards officers. In April detectives seized counterfeit computer equipment, clothing and CDs worth more than £10 million in a series of raids on outdoor markets in the area.

Silent Night 'premiere'

The nation's favourite carol, *Silent Night*, will be broadcast in full for the first time by the BBC on Christmas Eve after three forgotten verses were discovered in a family library in Austria. The carol, to be sung in the original German with English subtitles, was written by Joseph Mohr, a hard-drinking Salzburg gambler who became a priest. It was first performed at St Nikolaus Church, Oberndorf, in 1818.

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مركز العمل

Anguish from the dark heart of Africa



The Smiththerams on the Zambezi with Andrew and Caroline McGowan

Libby Purves on the heartbreak two families must endure after their children's killers fled jail

TWO British families, facing the first Christmas since the murder of their children in Mozambique, have learnt that the three killers have escaped from jail only eight weeks after being sentenced to life imprisonment.

Andrew and Caroline McGowan were ambushed by bush bandits after taking Caroline's parents, Edmund and Anne Smiththeram, to the airport in Harare, Zimbabwe, after a holiday in April. Mr McGowan, 35, a business consultant and his wife, 30, a teacher, were marched into the bush and shot dead.

"Our anger was to some extent assuaged by the trial and the maximum sentence," Mr Smiththeram said. "We are now devastated by this." Phyllis McGowan, the dead man's mother, said: "It has knocked us back very badly."

The capture of their murderers had been the culmination of a remarkable co-operation between British, Mozambican and Zimbabwean police. The bodies of Mr McGowan, a former army officer who served in Northern Ireland and the Falkland Islands, and his wife were not discovered until four days after they were attacked driving along a much-used corridor through Mozambique.

They were well settled in Africa. Mrs McGowan taught information technology at the school in Lilongwe, Malawi, painted the stage for drama productions, laid out the school magazine and ran, dishevelled and energetic, between classroom and staffroom.

Her husband gave long hours and his own money to a Round Table project for reforestation in Malawi. "He felt that he was putting something into Africa," his mother said. "He wanted to help."

In April the couple



organised a holiday for the Smiththerams. "The roles were reversed. We were the innocents," Mr Smiththeram recalled. "Anne and I are not great travellers and when we first went we could hardly believe we were actually going to be in Africa."

The couple treated the Smiththerams to a birdwatching safari, on ferry on the lake at Kariba and an elephant ride. "We ended up at Victoria Falls. We were entirely in their hands. We worried about malaria and they were very meticulous in looking after us — mosquito nets, all that," Mr Smiththeram said.

There had been incidents of bandit attack in the Tete corridor, but it is an essential link between relatively undeveloped Malawi and the Europeanised facilities of Zimbabwe. After dropping their parents at the airport the couple went shopping in Harare for a new fan for their house in Malawi before beginning to drive the 460 miles home.

As their four-wheel drive vehicle headed along the dirt road towards the Malawi border, they left the populated maize fields for wilder, more desolate bush country. After slowing to cross a small stream and round a bend they were held up by men in army fatigues carrying AK47 rifles, were forced to walk 30ft into the bush and were shot. The

stolen vehicle was crashed near Moatize village and picked up by the local police.

No inquiries were made at the time, although their passports were still in the vehicle. It was two days before the new school term began and Mrs McGowan was missed.

Ewan McGowan, the murdered man's brother and fellow-expatriate, began making his own inquiries. Eventually he and two friends drove into Mozambique, picked up news of the crash and began combing the bush.

There, by luck and persistence, he found the bodies of his younger brother and sister-in-law. They had been married just two years. In a continuing nightmare of bureaucratic difficulty he managed to fly the bodies home.

At the time it seemed impossible the murderers would ever be traced. Ewan McGowan wrote a bitter, unpublished statement saying: "Only now, a week after the event and after huge pressures, are they trying to do anything to catch the perpetrators of this atrocity. I cannot help but question why Mozambique has been allowed into the Commonwealth."

That outrage was echoed by the families at home. Mr Smiththeram is deputy head of the Royal Hospital School in Suffolk and there, in a room full of flowers and grief, he expressed the shock and bewilderment of a quiet English family blighted by this atrocity from the dark heart of Africa.

"The Foreign Office has said that the British High Commission is 'pressing at the highest levels' for an investigation. What does it mean? It is hard for us in peaceful Suffolk to know how things are in Africa, but you feel that the Commonwealth should be a family with the same values ... when British subjects come to an



Happy in Africa: Andrew and Caroline McGowan were married for just two years. His brother found their bodies after a persistent search

end in this ghastly way in a Commonwealth member country I would have thought the government would be vocal about it."

In the first confusing days the two sets of parents raged and protested against official inertia. Parliament was not sitting so there were no questions asked. Mrs Smiththeram said at the time: "When, this damn election is over we shall fight and fight. We are not giving up. I would hire mercenaries myself to shoot them. But I don't want them just to drag some poor devil into prison to shut us up. I want justice."

Down in Hampshire Ian McGowan, the dead man's father, had retired two days before the murders and set himself grimly to learn Portuguese so that he could contribute to the quest. The parents took advice, were told to bite back their rage and asked *The Times* not to publish their grief and anger. The details of the crime were so horrible that wide publicity in Britain could have become xenophobic and damaged the chance of cooperation from Mozambique.

It paid off. British police travelled out to begin a joint operation with the local force. Between June and August

three men were arrested: Ernesto Ferro, Paulino Nguaza, and Joaquim Quembo. Forensic tests were done to British standards; the criminal prosecutors in Tete have formally acknowledged the contribution of New Scotland Yard and Zimbabwean police.

In mid-October the McGowan and Mr Smiththeram flew to the Tete courtroom. Almost reluctantly, they were impressed.

There was an atmosphere of thoroughness and fairness," said Mr Smiththeram. "We are all convinced that the convictions are right. But also I felt that the local public who were in court were sympathetic to us, and appalled."

"We were not made to feel like foreigners coming and

making trouble. A number of people came and looked at my photographs of Andrew and Caroline."

He was able to address the court, through an interpreter, in the style of American victim statements. He said: "Caroline was our only daughter and is the last in our family line. With Andrew they were working for the future of Africa, and their reward is to be murdered."

Ewan McGowan made his own address: "Caroline and Andrew's deaths will not be totally meaningless if a proper example is set ... the message given clearly and unequivocally by this court may help save future lives."

He asked for the maximum sentence: each of the men was sentenced to 24 years. For the

families the process of healing began. Then last Tuesday the telephone rang and the Foreign Office told them the devastating news — the killers had escaped.

The men admitted when they pleaded guilty to the murders that they were former members of Renamo, the guerrilla movement that was backed by South Africa during the apartheid era against the left-wing Maputo government which left Mozambique devastated and impoverished.

Renamo is now a spent force in the area and it is more likely they were able to escape because of overcrowded and lax prison conditions than that they were helped to freedom or bribed their way out.

At Bishop Mackenzie School in Lilongwe, they are

planting a garden in memory of the murdered teacher and last week children and their parents, on what seems like another planet, collected for it at the Royal Hospital School carol service. Their deputy head stood among them sad, controlled and calm, not yet knowing that beyond the equator his child's murderers were free.

In the courtroom in Tete, Mr Smiththeram was allowed to take their photograph: three young, hard, unreadable faces. It was intended merely to go into a file as final evidence that justice was done for his lost daughter. Now that photograph has been sent to Mozambique, a country too poor to keep criminals' photographs on file, to help in the new manhunt.



The three killers: this picture of, from left, Paulino Nguaza, Ernesto Ferro and Joaquim Quembo was taken outside the courtroom. It has been sent to Mozambique to help the country's police in the manhunt

Yard helps Chechen police as hopes rise for kidnap Britons

By A CORRESPONDENT

OFFICERS from Scotland Yard have met security chiefs in Chechnya in an attempt to secure the freedom two British aid workers held hostage by gunmen for five months. Camilla Carr and Jon James were running a playscheme for children in the war-torn capital, Grozny, when they were seized by kidnappers in July.

In addition, President Maskhadov is understood to have told David Willets, a Conservative MP, that he believes the hostages could be free "in the near future". Mr Willets flew to Chechnya as part of a wider humanitarian mission concerned with smoothing the troubled relations between Russia and the



Jon James and Camilla Carr were captured in July

breakaway southern republic. There have been recent unconfirmed reports that the couple are safe and well and that ransom demands have been issued. The detectives have travelled to Chechnya

after a request by the Foreign Office to help their Russian counterparts.

News of the "low-key" visit emerged hours after family and friends of Miss Carr, 35, and Mr James, 37, held a

special service in Bath Abbey at the weekend. Prayers were read and Miss Carr's 11-year-old son, Ashok, lit a barbed wire-covered Amnesty International candle.

The families then appealed for people to light their own candles as a gesture of support for the campaign to free Mr James, of Lydney, Gloucestershire, and his girlfriend, of Ross-on-Wye, Hereford and Worcester. The service was filmed for Russian television and will be broadcast there next week in an effort to appeal to the captors.

Mr James, a builder, and Miss Carr, who worked at a community centre in Ross-on-Wye, were working for the Moscow-based Centre for Peacemaking and Community Development.



هكذا من العمل

David Blunkett, an ardent supporter of new Labour, has revealed his credentials as a Cabinet rebel

How benefit cuts forced minister out into the open

By Philip Webster, Political Editor

IF TONY BLAIR were privately asked to name the three top-performing ministers in the Cabinet since the election, David Blunkett would be one of them.

Once a focus of suspicion for Labour's modernisers, Mr Blunkett, both before the election and since, has eagerly embraced and promoted many of the new Labour reforms espoused by his leader. His readiness to remove any doubt over the future of existing grammar schools was of enormous symbolic importance to Mr Blair before May 1; perhaps only he could have pushed through the controversial plan for tuition fees for higher education without a substantial revolt. It is not hard to imagine the scenario if Harriet Harman had been given the task.

Which is why the emergence of his opposition to ideas for cutting benefits for the sick and disabled — which must be at the heart of any serious attempt to reduce Britain's burgeoning welfare bill — is so significant. It also helps explain the background to a key announcement by Mr Blair, saved up for a speech in his constituency on Saturday and ultimately heavily overshadowed by the leak of Mr Blunkett's letter to Gordon Brown.

While the public disclosure of Mr Blunkett's uncompromising objection to many of the proposals under review at the Treasury and the Department of Social Security was a severe blow to the Government's composure over the weekend, it was no surprise to Mr Blair. He was sent a copy of the letter which Mr Blunkett wrote to Mr Brown



Blunkett complained in letter to Chancellor

on December 9, two days before 47 Labour MPs went into the lobbies against the proposal to reduce benefit for single parents.

There are almost certainly other (so far unreported) letters from Cabinet ministers in the Whitehall system railing against various aspects of the no-holds-barred review being conducted with enthusiasm by a Treasury that often tried and failed to persuade a Conservative government to adopt controversial cost-cutting measures. John Prescott has privately warned the Cabinet that it must achieve a consensus for reform.

So when Mr Blair went to Sedgefield on Saturday, he had already taken a decision that may hold the key to the success or otherwise of the

welfare review, and of his premiership.

He announced that he would head a working party charged with welfare reform and with reducing the near £100 billion social security benefit. It produced the inevitable "Blair takes charge" interpretation and was intended to do so.

If he did not know it already, the lone parent vote crisis had convinced Mr Blair that the issue of welfare reform, so sensitive to his party but crucial to its hopes for a lengthy period in office, had become the most difficult of all. "Education, education and education" may be his stated priority. But no subject will take more of his time or energy over the 1½ years than trying to force through a programme that will be judged both by the number of people he can take off benefit and into work and the savings he can make.

He will be taking on a worried parliamentary party, and a deeply suspicious party in the country. And as Mr Blunkett's letter showed, he has trouble in the Cabinet as well. Comparisons can justly be made with Margaret Thatcher's battle against the "wets" in the early years of her government, and more recent ones with Mr Blair's own successful campaign to scrap Clause Four.

Although the working party's membership has not yet been fixed — Mr Brown, Ms Harman and Frank Field have so far been mentioned — Mr Blair may think it wise to make Mr Prescott a member.

At the end of the review Mr Blair will probably have to bang a lot of heads together to



Tony Blair and his son Euan at St James's Park yesterday. The Prime Minister allowed photographers to capture their outing to the match

come up with anything that can be portrayed as a root-and-branch shake-up.

Mr Blunkett's intervention was not a good start for him. In spite of his protestations of support for the welfare review yesterday, Mr Blunkett will now be seen as the Cabinet champion of the cause of the disabled.

Yesterday, in a skilful BBC Radio interview, Mr Blunkett could not have given a stronger endorsement to the principles of welfare reform, getting people off benefit into work, stopping scroungers, preventing a situation where people on benefit do better than those in work. He sounded again like the reformer rather than the Cabinet rebel portrayed in yesterday's papers and news broadcasts.

But therein lies the problem for Mr Blair. All of his Cabinet will happily back the broad objective of welfare reform. But when it comes to the specifics, they may not be so amenable. With disability benefits costing the country £23 billion a year, it is inevitable that they will have to be tackled and the bill reduced.

Leading article, page 21

EXTRACTS FROM BLUNKETT'S LETTER TO GORDON BROWN

Dear Gordon,

With disability benefits rising at 6 per cent per annum in real terms there is no doubt that the DSS faces questions that have to be addressed radically. I must however express grave anxiety... at some of the proposals that are being considered...

While we would welcome humane and sensitively judged reforms to support disabled people to work... deep cuts in the totality of support for those disabled people who either cannot work or can find only very modestly paid work, would make a mockery of our professions on social exclusion and the construction of a more just society.

The misapplication of perhaps 12 per cent of spending on [the disability living allowance] has, of course, urgently to be stopped. Home visits and inquiries through questionnaires and data-matching would seem appropriate ways to tackle fraud and abuse.

Since DLA is a benefit intended to provide a contribution to the extra costs associated with being disabled, as opposed to compensation for loss of income, and since the level of award is already differentiated to take account of the actual condition of the disabled person, it would not seem appropriate to tax, let alone means test it.

We support a review of the mobility components, but we would find it acceptable to

confine the higher rate only to those who are "virtually unable to walk" if there were also to be a reduced middle rate for those who experience real pain or fatigue over quite short distances. We know that for disabled people mobility costs, especially transport to work, are a severe problem.

Where we are strongly opposed to the thrust of the DSS's thinking on DLA is in the proposal for localisation. If localisation is to mean handing the well-being of disabled people, through DLA, to local authority social service departments, it will be a recipe for confusion, impoverishment and inequity. Cash-strapped local authorities will inevitably fail to provide adequately and will probably end up being cornered.

Capping — particularly capping of intensified severity — will mean local authorities will not have the resources to provide adequate support for disabled people. They are a weak political constituency, whose claims will be outgunned by the claims of education, housing and other interests.

In any case, local authorities lack the administrative tradition and means to cope with cash payments on the scale that would be required.

We recognise significant problems in relation to incapacity benefit. The differential from job seekers' allowance encourages people to present themselves as disabled and the all-work

test encourages them to present themselves as incapable of work. The inadequacy of the eight-week linking period further discourages IB claimants from trying out work.

On welfare-to-work grounds we hope these problems will be addressed...

We also hope that incapacity benefit will be reviewed with a view to supporting disabled people to undertake voluntary activity, which is a good preparation for real work and is good for citizenship and social inclusion.

We disagree strongly with the suggestion that IB should be means-tested.

Arguably, national insurance is the social contract between Government, citizen and employer. To lose it would undermine social cohesion. The commitment to work must be secured by social insurance. Means-testing — seductive though it may be to achieve short-term economies — creates disincentives to work, savings and honesty, in contradiction to the principle Harriet [Harman] has adopted.

It may well be appropriate to look to employers to provide [industrial injuries benefit] through private insurance...

To abolish industrial injuries benefit for existing claimants would surely be unacceptable politically. It would no doubt be a matter on which the Chief Whip would need to make a judgment.

David Blunkett

Question is what sort of reform?

THE welfare state was defended by Tony Blair in a speech to his constituency on Saturday. The following is an extract of his comments:

"The choice is simple. Do we think the current system where we are set soon to spend almost £100 billion a year but poverty has rocketed, is fine? Or can we do better?"

"The question is not whether to reform but what sort of reform. The system is not working as the country wants it to. And yet people are saying, 'Don't touch the system.'"

"We believe in the responsibility of society to help those who are in genuine need, unable to look after themselves."

"We believe in the responsibility of individuals to provide for themselves where they can do so. And we believe that for those who can work, work itself is the best answer to poverty."

"These were actually the guiding principles of Sir William Beveridge, well worth restating to see how far today's reality has departed from yesterday's vision."

"And I would add a fourth principle. The system should be designed so that fraud and abuse are minimised, and routed out wherever they are found."

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BT It's good to talk...this Christmas

Lilley calls on Robinson to quit over deals

By Jon Ashworth

GEOFFREY ROBINSON, the Paymaster-General, faced fresh calls for his resignation yesterday amid claims that he broke the law by failing to disclose full details of share dealings linked to a Guernsey-based trust.

Mr Robinson, who is facing growing public disquiet over his complex financial arrangements, is thought to have breached the Companies Act 1985 by failing to disclose all stages of a share transaction involving TransTec, the engineering company he founded. The Act says that a company director is under an obligation to notify the company of any deal to buy or sell shares.

The claims met with an angry reaction from the Conservatives, who repeated calls for Mr Robinson to resign. Peter Lilley, the Shadow Chancellor, said: "Last week Tony Blair told the House of Commons that Geoffrey Robinson had not avoided any UK tax and that he had not broken

the law. The latest revelations tell a different story."

He added: "Line by line, Geoffrey Robinson's statements have been ripped apart. His credibility has been shot to pieces. He should resign."

The register of share dealings by Mr Robinson in TransTec suggests that the entry concerning deals in 1996 is incomplete. It shows that he acquired an interest in 9.8 million TransTec shares in August 1996, but not that he had the right to buy the shares at below market price, netting him a profit of £882,000.

The rights were sold to Stenbell, a UK company under Mr Robinson's control, which in turn struck a deal with the Guernsey-based Orion Trust, of which Mr Robinson and his family are beneficiaries.

Orion effectively put up the money needed to "exercise" the rights, before buying the shares from Stenbell. Doing the deal in stages had the effect of distancing Mr Robinson from Orion.

Mr Robinson is thought to have fallen foul of UK company law by failing to disclose all stages of the Stenbell-Orion deal. The Companies Act 1985 falls under the Department of Trade and Industry, which declined to comment yesterday.

Mr Robinson yesterday stuck to a prepared statement issued on Friday in which he denied allegations of impropriety, and said he saw no reason why he should resign as a Treasury minister.



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مكتبة الأمل

Skegness, the Christmas star in the East

Damian Whitworth finds the windswept resort is the number one destination for discerning holidaymakers

THIS year's dream Christmas destination? Skegness. Turn up in the windswept Lincolnshire coastal resort on Christmas Eve and you will be told there is no room at the inn. If you wanted a view of the North Sea you had to book months ago.

Thousands may be flying out of Britain for the ski slopes or the Caribbean sun-spots, but "Skeggy" is this year's unlikely hit. According to tourism chiefs it is all because of Skegness's Victorian charm.

Bob Smith, head of tourism for East Lindsey District Council, said: "A lot of people think Skegness is dead at Christmas, but this year has taken off to such an extent we're finding the season is about to roll into one. We used to shut down for the winter, now we're gearing up for it. Christmas in Skegness has become massive."

"People come here to get away from it all. It's mainly people whose sons and daughters have grown up and have families of their own and are in search of a relaxed, traditional break, away from the hassle and stresses often associated with Christmas."

"Visitors are attracted by the friendly nature, it is good value for money and provides relaxing walks along the seafront with fresh clean air. It's a great place to recharge the batteries. Though the average temperature at this time of year is 6.5 centigrade, we are known as being on the drier side of Britain."

In the summer, the population of 16,000 quadruples to fill 60,000 beds. Traditionally, many of the hotels and caravan sites have shut up shop for the winter, but in recent years more and more have stayed open and this year the council has declared that Skegness now has one, year-long season.

Gordon Cartwright, 58, chairman of the Hoteliers Association and proprietor of the White Lodge Guest House,



Town always appealed to the outdoor type

said that Skegness easily rivalled more obviously glamorous resorts.

"The trend has been more and more for people to go away for Christmas and coming to Skegness is very easy because it's near the A1. We've got as much to offer as foreign holidays. There's lots to do, plenty of entertainment."

Neither should the weather put people off, he insisted. "It's bracing," he said indignantly, echoing the travel posters of yesteryear. "The tourist board sell Skegness air in cans."

His guests are obviously not impressed with the alternatives, skiing in the French Alps, for example, or lazing on the beaches of the Dominican Republic. Mr Cartwright has been booked up for his three-night, full board Christmas break at £154 per person since last Christmas. "We can't fit everyone in during the Christmas week, so we've been packaging Christmas in weekends for the last four weeks. Guests arrive on Friday night, which we treat as Christmas Eve, and we serve up fish and chips and festive drinks. Saturday is treated as Christmas Day with all the trimmings on offer, and Sunday is Boxing Day. The weekend is mixed with all the usual festive food

and drink, as well as traditional activities such as dancing and bingo."

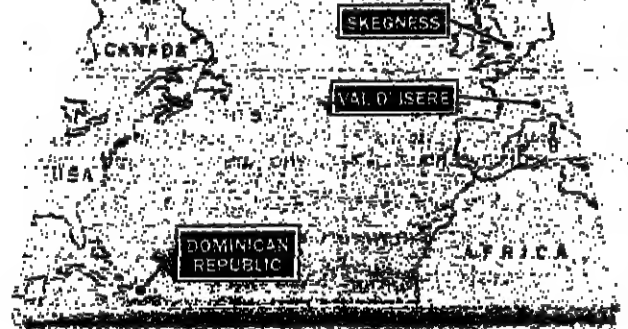
Jim Childs, who with his wife Christine runs The Vine, an 18th Century Victorian hotel just off the seafront, said this year was the best Christmas he had ever seen in Skegness. "The town's attraction is typically British and traditional for Christmas time. It's order and relaxation. It's definitely a Victorian style Christmas holiday and, judging by the increasing popularity, it appears more people want that."

Others, such as Bob Marsden, 48, who runs the Caxton House Hotel, have more prosaic reasons for the influx. "I can only guess it's because people get stuck in a rut," he said.

"I think a lot of people come to a place like this because for so many years they've got fed up of the hassle of a family Christmas. Rather than picking and choosing who to spend Christmas with and risking offending relatives, they take the easy way out and book a week away."



Santa Claus, who arrived in Skegness yesterday, is in for a busy time as the resort's hotels and boarding houses are booked up for the holiday



SKEGNESS

Attractions: bracing walks along sandy beaches, bingo, indoor bowls. Christmas Day dance at the Embassy Centre. On Boxing Day a spectacular by students of the Jazzy Sutton dancing school opens at the same venue. Fish and chip shops open on Christmas Day.

for Butterish types still hungry after lunch. Cost: three nights full board, including Christmas lunch, at White Lodge, £154. Weather: Fresh, or freezing, depending on whether you come from Skegness or not. Downsides: See above.

DOMINICAN REPUBLIC



Attractions: three or four-star accommodation on the beach, with warm seas for endless watersports and golf courses in the hinterland. Barbecue under the stars, endless rum punches etc.

fortnight all-inclusive with Thomson. Weather: temperatures in the high 80s, humidity low, almost guaranteed sunshine. Downsides: er, doesn't sound like it.

Cost: from £700 for a

VAL D'ISERE



Attractions: one of Europe's most popular skiing resorts, with excellent lifts and generally free of posing celebrities and characters from Hello! After a day on the pistes, where better to kick off the après ski and compare tans than in Dick's Tea-Bar?

Cost: a Christmas break in a Ski Company chalet starts at £1,484. Weather: the snow has not been good so far, so the pistes are icy and crowded. Downsides: so full of English people you will probably meet somebody from the office.

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المخزن الأول

Duchess of York reaps benefit from season of goodwill

Health scare has given her a rare burst of sympathy from a press which suddenly sees her as a victim of the Royal Family, writes Alan Hamilton

THE Duchess of York sets out with her daughters, Princess Beatrice and Princess Eugenie, for their Christmas holiday at Sandringham today, waited on their way by a breeze of unusually sympathetic press coverage.

Sunday newspaper readers could have been forgiven for imagining that the duchess, portrayed as downtrodden and hard-done-by, had started a media offensive to wreak revenge on a Royal Family pictured as dumping her in 1992 with a pittance of a divorce settlement compared to that negotiated by her fellow outcast, the late Diana, Princess of Wales.

Yesterday, however, the duchess's spokeswoman dismissed any suggestion of a concerted campaign to win sympathy and a possible renegotiation of divorce terms. She ascribed the sudden upsurge in friendly interest to tabloid overexcitement at the duchess's hospital appointment last week, when an hour-long consultation and a biopsy confirmed that, whatever she might be suffering from, it was certainly not cancer.

What is known, however, is that the duchess, who has paid off her £4.2 million overdraft at Coutts, faces a demand for more than £700,000 from the Inland Revenue for her 1996 earnings, and that, to sort out her financial affairs, she has retained Anthony Julius, the lawyer who negotiated Diana, Princess of Wales's £17 million divorce settlement. When the duchess divorced in 1992, she received £800,000, plus a further £1.4 million placed in trust for her children.

"She has finally realised what she should have done long ago: that she needs professional representation, rather than trying to negotiate



The Sunday papers gave the duchess unaccustomed backing as she set off for Christmas at Sandringham

contracts herself," the spokeswoman said.

She was unable to say whether the duchess had instructed lawyers to seek a better deal from the Queen to cover the cost of bringing up her children. Buckingham Palace said yesterday it knew nothing of any attempt by the duchess to renegotiate terms.

After last week's rash of cancer scare stories, the chorus of "poor Fergie" was resumed on Saturday, with the *Daily Mail* suggesting that the duchess's health might be suffering from being frozen out by the Royal Family, and being billed by the Royal Household for such niggardly items as £75 for lightbulbs for her temporary home at Sunninghill Park, and £100 for laundry during a visit to Balmoral.

"There is concern that she is being brought almost to her

knees. Sarah is said to be not only depressed, but frightened," the *Mail* said. Such fine detail as lightbulb bills is garnered only when leaked to sympathetic newspapers by unnamed and unknown sources wishing to advance the duchess's cause and ensure some small degree of rehabilitation for her on the edges of the Royal Family.

Yesterday's *Mail On Sunday* continued the offensive, painting a picture of Dickensian bleakness of how the duchess will spend Christmas alone in Wood Farm on the Sandringham estate watching videos, while her children are up at the big house partying with their grandmother, their father and the rest of the Royal Family.

"Having managed to clear so much of her overdraft, it would only be human of her to wish that the Queen might

help her clear the rest," the paper said.

The rival *Express* yesterday published a story suggesting that the Queen had delivered "the final insult to Fergie" by refusing to allow her to convert the stable block at the Yorks' former marital home at Sunninghill as a residence for herself and her daughters.

"The duchess, recovering from a virus infection, stress and exhaustion, believes it's the final act of being frozen out," the *Express* said.

The *Sunday Times* claimed that the duchess would try to negotiate more money from the Queen to cover her children's living expenses. Their school fees, and an annual living allowance of £2,000 for each child, are paid by their father from his £37,000-a-year Royal Navy pay but, the paper claimed, the duchess was still left severely out of pocket.

The duchess's spokeswoman said yesterday that some of the reports were exaggerated. "She is quite relaxed about going to Wood Farm for Christmas; it is exactly the same arrangement that has pertained for several years past. As for not being allowed to convert the stables at Sunninghill, it was a possibility that was briefly considered eight months ago, but there have been no further developments."

Although the Queen and the duchess are said to remain on friendly terms, any attempt to make peace with the duchess is likely to be resisted by the Duke of Edinburgh, who has always considered her somewhat vulgar, and who was reportedly furious at her interview on American television when she said that she had turned down an invitation to last month's royal golden wedding service in Westminster



The Duke and Duchess of York with Princess Beatrice at the ballet on Saturday

Abbey because she had not been asked to any parties afterwards.

Friends, and even the official spokeswoman, had to make rapid excuses for her remarks, saying that they were completely out of character because the duchess was so confused and exhausted by a

frantic work schedule. Despite the best efforts of the weekend papers, winning sympathy for the duchess is not the easiest of tasks.

The former butler to Diana, Princess of Wales, is expected to receive a £50,000 bequest from her will, according to reports yesterday. Relatives of

the Princess asked for the bequest to be made to Paul Burrell, whom she called "my rock". Lawyers acting for the Princess's estate went to the High Court last Thursday to add extra legacies to the £21 million will, which had not been updated at the time of her death.

Tribute to Diana will swell Queen's audience

By Alan Hamilton

AFTER years of declining interest, the Queen's traditional Christmas broadcast is likely to have its biggest-ever audience this year, with demand fuelled by the death of Diana, Princess of Wales.

Although Buckingham Palace has resolutely refused to disclose the contents of the programme in advance, the Queen is believed to have included a moving tribute to her former daughter-in-law. The programme, recorded by the Queen at Windsor last week, will include footage of the Princess's funeral, as well as shots of the Queen's controversial tour of India and Pakistan, her golden wedding celebrations at Westminster Abbey, and the restoration of Windsor Castle after the fire.

Suggestions that the Queen perform live, in the wake of her live address before the Princess's funeral, were eventually rejected in favour of a pre-recorded documentary-style ten-minute programme.

A recent opinion poll found that this year's was likely to be watched by a record audience, after a recent decline. Last year's audience was 11 million, from 17.4 million in 1995.

Continuing media interest in the Princess's death prompted her mother, Frances Shand Kydd, to issue an appeal yesterday for peace and privacy over Christmas, after *Paris-Match* published what it claimed to be her daughter's last interview.

In a handwritten message faxed to the Press Association, Mrs Shand Kydd said: "During the last few days, many speculative articles have been printed concerning my daughter Diana. Christmas is as difficult for her beloved sons, William and Harry, and for all her family and close friends, as it is for all families who have recently suffered a bereavement. I ask, on behalf of Diana's family, that we may all be left in peace and silence by the media."

Pall-bearer hired by Al Fayed



Bartlett, second from left, carrying the Princess's coffin

ONE of the pall-bearers at the funeral of Diana, Princess of Wales, begins work today as a security guard for Mohamed Al Fayed (Tim Jones writes).

Philip Bartlett, 23, one of 12 Welsh Guardsmen who carried the coffin on to the gun carriage at Kensington Palace said he considered it a privilege to work for the Harrods owner.

He will begin his £16,500-a-

year job on the shopfloor of the Knightsbridge store and hopes eventually to be part of the "A team" responsible for Mr Al Fayed's protection.

Mr Bartlett, of Brecon, Powys, said that, after the funeral, he sent Mr Al Fayed a photograph of the Welsh Guards carrying the coffin. "He wrote back to say he would never forget how a single carnation thrown by someone in the crowd stayed on the coffin because we held it so still."

The guardsman, who left the Army a week ago after serving for four years, was one of 50 applicants for the post. He said: "The protection of VIPs is my field and that is where I see my future."

"I decided to leave the Army because I could not see myself progressing beyond the rank of guardsman. I played rugby all the time for the regiment and that meant there was no time to go on promotion courses. In any event, although I loved the Army, I wanted more freedom and more time to be with my girlfriend and my little daughter, Bryony."

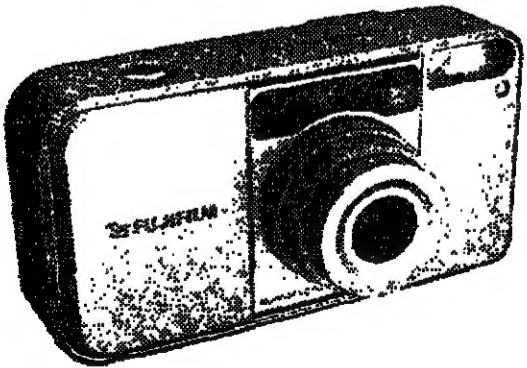
Recalling the funeral, he said: "The moment I will always remember is when we saw Diana's coffin for the first time. We were all choked by the wreath on top with the card which said 'Mummy'. When we walked out of Kensington Palace the emotion of the crowd hit us like a brick. I still can't express how I felt. It was a great honour, but also one of the saddest moments of my life."

Mr Bartlett believes he can progress in the organisation to a post similar to that held by Trevor Rees-Jones, the bodyguard who survived the crash that killed the Princess and Dodi Fayed.



Bartlett: he hopes to become a bodyguard

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Public service is a case of jobs for the boys

By VALERIE ELLIOTT
WHITEHALL EDITOR

WOMEN are still heavily outnumbered by men on public bodies, according to figures released by the Cabinet Office. Some 96 per cent of appointments to the Ministry of Defence last year went to men. At the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, the split is 88 per cent men and 12 per cent women.

Ministers and senior officials are clearly embarrassed by the generally poor record of women's appointments, which is disclosed in *Public Bodies*, the annual audit of such organisations, which was quietly released in the Commons last week. One Whitehall source explained that, as most of the information applied to the previous Government, it was thought better to release the document without a fanfare.

The Scottish Office has the best record in government for promoting women, with 47

MEN FORM THE MINISTRY

Department	Male	Female	Percentage
Scottish Office	2,047	1,822	53.47
Home Office	1,327	931	59.41
Health	2,759	1,705	62.38
Northern Ireland	925	536	63.37
Social Security	4,751	2,659	64.36
Education & Emp	270	144	65.35
Culture, Media, Sport	382	143	73.27
Welsh Office	460	163	74.26
Int Development	43	13	77.23
Foreign Office	55	18	75.25
Trade and Industry	2,589	841	75.25
Treasury	68	23	77.23
Environment, Transp, Regions	784	232	77.23
Cabinet Office	57	17	77.23
Lord Chancellor's Dept	4,340	1,251	78.22
Agriculture	756	104	88.12
Defence	244	10	96.4

Public Bodies 1997 (Stationery Office, £15.50)

per cent of jobs taken by women. In the Welsh Office, however, ministers are deeply concerned that they are unable to find suitable women candidates to fill vacancies on key bodies and committees.

Ron Davies, the Welsh Sec-

retary, was convinced that successive Conservative Governments had operated a "jobs for the boys" system in Wales and, within weeks of office, he caused a furore in government circles when he told colleagues that he intended to scrap the

list of names of people deemed suitable for public appointments and placed advertisements in the Welsh press, inviting people to send in their names for consideration.

Last week, however, he called an urgent meeting of Welsh women MPs to lament the fact that just 29 per cent of applications came from women.

The Ministry of Defence last night insisted that it was making every effort to give women more opportunities in the Armed Forces and throughout the organisation. More women were being recruited to frontline posts in the Armed Forces.

Harriet Harman, the Cabinet Minister in charge of women's issues, and Joan Ruddock, Minister for Women, are certain to order urgent action to address the situation. They have embarked on regional visits to try to encourage women to put their names forward for public appointments.



Joan Ruddock, left, and Harriet Harman: encouraging women to put their names forward for appointments

Repeal of sex discrimination laws 'would help job prospects'

By NICHOLAS WOOD

WOMEN would be better off without laws banning sex discrimination at work, according to a right-wing attack on feminism.

A forthcoming report from the Institute of Economic Affairs says that the free market offers women a stronger guarantee of equal opportunity than legislation covering

equal pay, state-subsidised childcare, and affirmative action — measures to persuade employers to recruit women.

David Conway, the author, believes that the approach of most feminists is neither necessary nor effective in promoting women's interests. "These measures are both costly, ineffective and deprive women of the opportunity to be the

primary carers of their children, which many still appear to want to be," Professor Conway, of Middlesex University, says in a draft of his report *A Woman's Place is in the Market*.

The philosopher says that the unfettered operation of the free market is the best means of eliminating the obstacles to equal opportunities. Firms should be

allowed to pay men and women different wages for the same work. In such a free-for-all, women would be able to move into areas traditionally dominated by men by undercutting their wages. If they wished, women could also set up female-only businesses.

Professor Conway says that the effect of free competition would be selection and promotion on merit.

"Otherwise, the discriminating firm would go out of business."

In a further act of heresy, he condemns plans for state-subsidised childcare as restricting the choices available to couples. "The costs of the State providing or subsidising childcare would so increase tax rates as to compel many women to work, even though they preferred to look after their

own pre-school children at home."

He also rejects affirmative action as "profoundly flawed" because such policies are self-defeating and there are no good reasons for compensating today's women for the injustices of the past.

"Unless women are appointed and promoted solely and exclusively on the basis of merit, their achievements are always liable to

be supposed by themselves and others to be owed less to their merit than to discrimination in favour of them."

He says that "free-market feminism" is the way to advance women's opportunities at work. "Women have not escaped the tyranny of men to fall victim to a no-less oppressive form of tyranny exercised by doctrinaire feminists."

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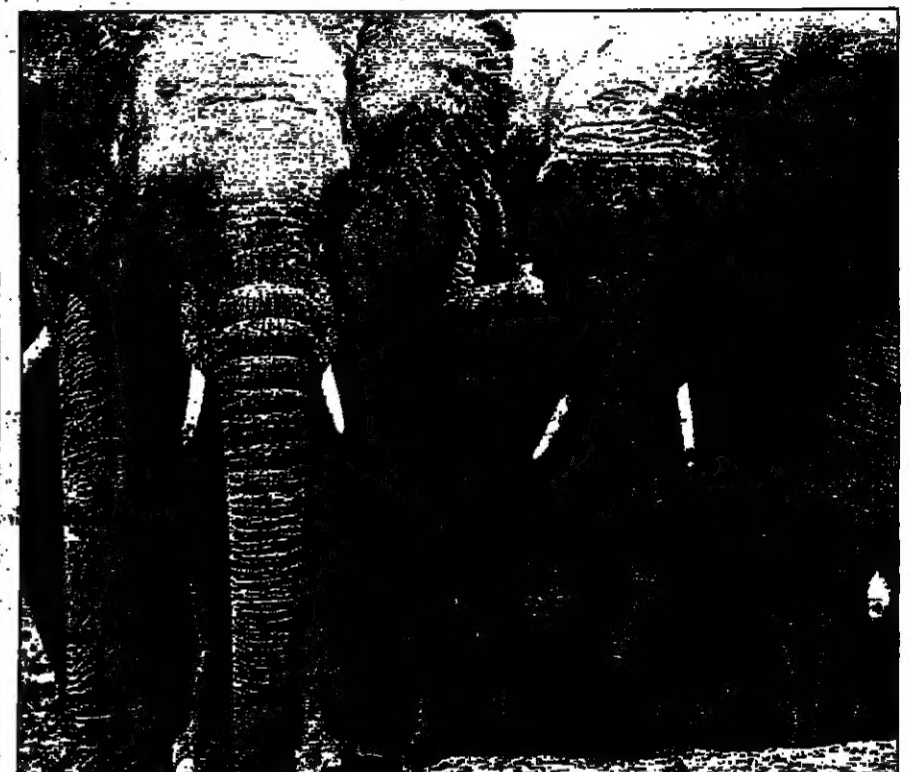
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The Amboseli Elephant Research Project in Kenya monitors 1,000 elephants

Elephants saved from cruel life in the circus

By PHILIP DELVES BROUGHTON

DEEP in Tennessee, the sound of trumpeting elephants rises above the tree line. The animals appear delighted to be in safe hands after a life of maltreatment on the road with circuses. Their sanctuary, stretches across 112 acres of wooded pasture. It is run by two Americans, Carol Buckley and Scott Blais, with help from the Born Free Foundation, one of the two charities nominated by *The Times* for its Christmas appeal.

Jenny the elephant had been in circuses for 27 years when she was taken to the sanctuary. She was blind in one eye, had a broken and infected tusk and diseased hind feet. In six months she has rediscovered her spirit. She scrambles all over the sanctuary and has put on a good amount of weight.

The foundation's support for work with elephants is not limited, however, to the American Deep South. Since 1989, it has lent its muscle to the fight against the trade in ivory. In Tanzania, it has given two Toyota Land-cruisers to the Government's anti-poaching patrols in the north and central areas of the country. It also assists in the maintenance of vehicles that cover thousands of bumpy miles.

For the Amboseli Elephant Research Project in Kenya, the longest-running field research project for elephants in the world, the foundation has recently bought a vehicle and camera equipment. It has paid for one of the researchers to do a three-month course in statistical analysis at Sussex University, which will help in the monitoring of 1,000 elephants around Amboseli.

Born Free Appeal

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If more than the £40,000 required for the gene sequencer is raised through this Christmas appeal, it will go directly to other vital prostate cancer research at the Institute of Cancer Research.

Worst outbreak of meningitis is likely to escalate

BRITAIN is suffering the worst outbreak of meningitis, the deadly brain and blood poisoning disease, for half a century. Experts are urging the public — especially parents of young children — to be vigilant over Christmas and the new year as December and January are the worst months for infection.

Julia Warren, of the Meningitis Research Foundation, said yesterday: "We are at a 50-year peak. Why, we do not know. But it may be that people's immune systems are suppressed, making them more susceptible to the bacteria."

This year there have been more than 2,300 cases of the two most severe forms of the disease, meningococcal meningitis and septicaemia, and 240 deaths. But Ms Warren said cases this year were likely to surpass the 1947 total of 2,500. The highest number of cases this century was during

■ Parents are being advised to be vigilant at the worst time of year for infection. Experts advise them to use a simple and quick test that can save lives, reports Nick Nuttall

something more serious. The glass test is very effective and we have 30 people who we believe are still alive because they used it."

Valerie Bright, of King's Somborne in Hampshire, believes that using the tumbler test saved her daughter Hayley, 3. "Hayley was taken ill during the night," she said. "She was sick several times and had a temperature. I thought it was a stomach bug, but after she woke for the third time, I spotted a rash and spots on her legs and arms."

"I remembered seeing a television advert which recommended using a tumbler on a rash to see if it might be meningitis. If the rash stays, you should call a doctor. Hayley's rash stayed and I rang my GP straight away. He came and gave her penicillin."

"He said we had to get her to hospital quickly. Waiting for an ambulance would have meant too much of a delay. So we put her in a neighbour's car for the 20-minute drive to the hospital. By the time we got to hospital, she was slipping into unconsciousness and had gone into shock."

Her daughter was put on a drip and given more antibiotics to combat the infection. Doctors praised Ms Bright and her GP for acting so quickly. "We were told that, if we had left it another hour, Hayley might well have died," Ms Bright said.

Doctors are also warning parents of older children to be vigilant. They have been alarmed by a 30 per cent increase this year in the number of cases of meningococcal septicaemia, particularly among adults under 25.

Meningococcal meningitis causes an inflammation of the brain; meningococcal septicaemia causes blood poisoning that can lead to organ failure and gangrene. About

60 per cent of sufferers get both inflammation of the brain and blood poisoning.

At St Mary's Hospital in West London, paediatricians have treated 100 seriously ill children this year, more than the number treated last year.

Doctors at the hospital are taking part in an international trial of a treatment that appears to stop septic shock killing the most seriously ill patients. They are treating patients with a protein synthesised from white blood cells. "It blocks the cascade of toxic shock that sets in when patients have septicaemia," said Saul Faust, who is helping to conduct the trial.



Joseph, his half-brother Tony, and the tumbler he urged his mother to use that may have saved Joseph's life

Boy's life saved by watchful brother

TONY SCOTT may have saved the life of his four-year-old half-brother when experts failed to detect meningitis.

Tony, 14, was unconvinced when a doctor said the rash on Joseph, Earle's body was a virus. When spots started to appear on Joseph's feet, as well as his stomach, Tony urged his mother, Susan, 35, to do the tumbler test he had seen on television.

She pressed a glass on to Joseph's feet and the spots remained. She telephoned the doctor and Joseph was quickly admitted to hospital where meningitis was diagnosed. Joseph has his half-brother to thank that he escaped with nothing worse than a minor vision defect.

His stepfather, Gary, 34, a bus driver from Blyth in Northumberland, said: "What Tony did was excellent. He saved Joseph's life because he had meningococcal septicaemia and we caught it early."

Tony said: "People say I have done very well, but I'm just glad I saw the advert and was able to do something."

TUMBLER TEST

If the patient exhibits a rash, press a glass firmly against the skin. If the spots fail to disappear, this could indicate meningitis.

the war years of 1942-44, when there were 12,000 to 13,000 cases annually.

Experts believe that the extremely high level of cases was due to people living in close proximity in army barracks or air raid shelters. Meningitis is spread when people are in close contact, such as when kissing or if someone sneezes.

The foundation has launched a television commercial featuring a simple test using a glass. If a rash is discovered and is still there after being pressed with a glass, the patient should seek urgent medical help.

"In many cases last year parents found out too late that a child was seriously ill. The disease is very difficult to diagnose as the symptoms are similar to flu, but people have to trust their instincts and seek medical help if they feel it is



St Mary's Hospital in West London: testing new therapy for septic shock resulting from meningitis

Readers' quest for calm leads to stampede

BY PHILIP DELVES BROUGHTON

THE most extraordinary publishing success of the year has been *The Little Book of Calm*. Hundreds of thousands of people have paid £1.99 for a book just 3in by 4in and containing no more than 1,000 words of advice.

This week the book was at No 2 in the paperback bestseller charts. It has been in the top ten since its publication in October last year and has sold 1.4 million copies. Next year the sequel, *Calm At Work*, will be published by Penguin.

The book is the work of Paul Wilson, an Australian advertising executive who has followed the career path of such advertisers as Peter Mayle and Nicholas Evans, author of *The Horse Whisperer*.

Wilson's book is a hotchpotch of every alternative health and cod philosophical notion on the market. He recommends the "rediscovery of milk" for the relaxing powers it contains, even though it would take gallons of the stuff to have a noticeably relaxing effect.

He advises on deep breathing and, for bad sleepers, he suggests a patchouli pillow. Other

tips include: "Declare today a holiday", and "Make friends with a massage".

On his Calm Web site, Mr Wilson, who is pictured in meditative pose, expresses his admiration for meditation. He writes: "I've always been interested in meditation for what it does, rather than for what it is. I just like the way great achievements come from being calm."

For one so calm, Mr Wilson is remarkably dynamic in the promotion of his business. *Calm* is a burgeoning trade. He produces Calm CDs with titles including *Orchestrated Calm*, *Masters of Calm* and *Deep Calm*.

He has run the Calm Centre in Sydney since 1995. It is described as "a think-tank involving psychologists, natural therapists, film-makers, composers and musicians".

His methods have been attacked by psychologists, who believe he is selling platitudes that deal in superficialities. But Mr Wilson claims: "Clinical proof can get in the way of things that actually work for people."

A self-help guide, page 17

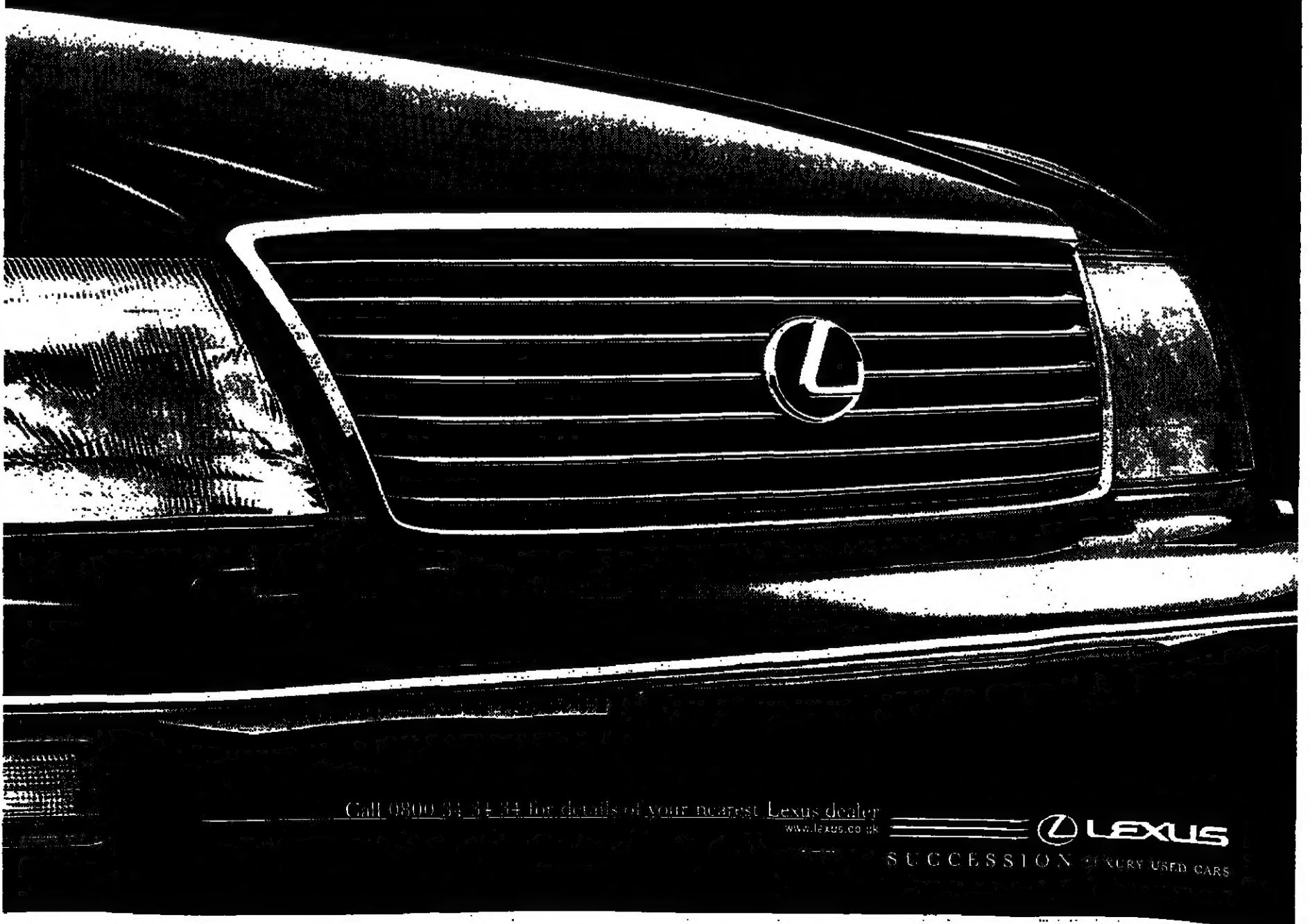
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Cost of family Christmas goes down — by £9

INFLATION may be running at 2.8 per cent, but at least one thing is falling — the cost of Christmas.

The bill for the average family's Christmas is £209.50, down £9 from last year's total and the first fall in at least four years. However, the figure is almost 3½ times more than it was in 1977, according to the longest established Christmas price index calculated in Britain.

Particularly useful savings were registered on the costs of Christmas trees, crackers, cards and gift wrapping, with cheaper gin, brandy and pudding also contributing to the improvement. But potatoes have trebled in price since last year, and turkey, brussels sprouts, mince pies, chocolates, Christmas cake and beer are also more expensive.

The index was devised by a Conservative MP who became Minister for Consumer Affairs and chairman of the National Consumer Council. The basket of items chosen to represent the "average" family's Christmas is odd in several respects: the index insists on fresh turkey, at £1.35 a pound this year, although most turkeys are

Falling price of crackers, trees and gin is welcome gift for 'average' family, writes Robin Young

sold frozen, in which form they cost a mere 49p a pound. The turkey apparently goes unstuffed and without trimmings. The index does not mention bacon, chipolata sausages or cranberry sauce. The family is also expected to survive Christmas without a single satsuma or any other fresh fruit.

They do not drink wine and have only one pint of beer between them, although they drink three bottles of spirits.

When the figures were first calculated in 1973 by Baroness Oppenheim-Barnes, then Sally Oppenheim, Conservative MP for Gloucester, the

cost of providing a married couple and two children with all the Christmas trimmings itemised in her list was £34.89. Mrs Oppenheim claimed in 1977 that, under a Labour Government, the cost of Christmas had doubled since 1973, and she produced a shopping list to prove it.

The Times has repeated the same items regularly since 1978, revisiting the same North London supermarket to compare prices. Many things have happened to complicate the calculations in the intervening years. Metrication and changing habits have induced manufacturers to abandon some of the weights specified by Mrs Oppenheim.

This year's 1½lb Christmas pudding, for example, is in fact a 454g (1lb) pudding with a second of 227g (½lb) added to make up the weight. Most puddings in the shop, with descriptions such as "luxury", "connoisseur" and "extra rich and fruity", were pricier.

Where equivalents were no longer available, it was assumed for the purpose of this year's calculation that the family had no choice but to buy the nearest alternative.

THE COST OF CHRISTMAS						
ITEM	1973	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997
Turkey, 14lb each	1.35	13.80	15.00	15.00	15.00	15.00
Mince pies, 6	0.50	0.50	0.50	0.50	0.50	0.50
Christmas pudding, 1lb	2.82	2.82	2.82	2.82	2.82	2.82
Christmas cake, 40oz	5.49	5.49	5.49	5.49	5.49	5.49
Brussels sprouts, 1lb	0.85	0.85	0.85	0.85	0.85	0.85
Potatoes, 5lb	0.50	1.50	1.50	1.50	1.50	1.50
Chocolates, 1lb	1.50	1.50	1.50	1.50	1.50	1.50
Assorted nuts, 1lb	0.80	0.80	0.80	0.80	0.80	0.80
Christmas tree, 7ft	18.50	18.50	18.50	18.50	18.50	18.50
Tree lights	6.99	6.99	6.99	6.99	6.99	6.99
Crackers, 12	1.40	1.40	1.40	1.40	1.40	1.40
Box of 12 crackers	7.18	7.18	7.18	7.18	7.18	7.18
Bottle of gin	8.74	8.74	8.74	8.74	8.74	8.74
Bottle of brandy	8.72	8.72	8.72	8.72	8.72	8.72
Bottle of whisky	8.99	8.99	8.99	8.99	8.99	8.99
Bottle of beer	9.50	9.50	9.50	9.50	9.50	9.50
Beer, 12 bottles	0.85	0.85	0.85	0.85	0.85	0.85
Christmas cards, 12	2.80	2.80	2.80	2.80	2.80	2.80
Wrapping paper, 5 sheets	4.15	4.15	4.15	4.15	4.15	4.15
Postage, first class x 24	6.00	6.00	6.00	6.00	6.00	6.00
Toys and games	98.00	98.00	98.00	98.00	98.00	98.00
Parcel Post, x 2kg	13.20	13.20	13.20	13.20	13.20	13.20
Total £	60.60	193.93	200.45	205.53	219.50	210.50

This year, for example, it became impossible to buy sheets of wrapping paper in the store. A roll of gift wrap was substituted, saving £2.16.

The saving on Christmas cards owed something to the fact that, last year, the store had sold out early of its cheaper ranges.

Being a supposedly "average" family, "luxury" or "premium" qualities have been ignored where more basic goods are offered. How-

ever, this year's mince pies are "deep-filled", and were on special promotion reduced from 89p. The shop had no standard pies on offer.

The Christmas tree shows a saving because this year the store reintroduced Norwegian spruce. The more needle-retentive Nordman variety would have cost £18.99, and would have pushed this year's total above that for 1996.

The three bottles of spirits are the supermarket's own brand, but all are 5cl smaller than they were in 1973, when the standard bottle size was still 75cl. The solitary pint of beer, of course, comes from a British supermarket, not Calais, where it might have been bought for 14p, or a pub, where it might have cost £1.85.

As always, it would be possible to buy many of the goods more cheaply from discount stores or market

stalls. Toy prices, in particular, vary widely and no modern child would be content with the meagre choice of games and toys available in our supermarket.

None of the toys and games in the selection priced in 1978 remains on sale, so we priced an up-to-date selection from those now in stock. Even so, that included nothing from the Spice Girls or Teletubbies ranges.

The £101 we spent on toys is not much above the national average per child, but is supposed to buy presents for two. Even so, family expenditure on toys, up 5½ times since 1977 in our survey, has shown one of the more rapid escalations in the list. Among the most stable prices in the list are those of the nuts, brandy and the turkey.

The complete figures for 1977, 1993, 1994, 1995, last year and this are given in the chart above.

Drink-drive campaign 'undermined' by pub prices

By JIM JONES

A GOVERNMENT minister yesterday criticised pub landlords for undermining the Christmas drink-drive campaign by charging extortionate prices for soft drinks.

Nigel Griffiths, the Consumer Affairs Minister, said he was outraged that, in some bars, a pint of lemonade could cost more than a pint of beer. Unless prices were reduced, he said, he would introduce orders forcing licensees to display the prices of soft drinks.

Mr Griffiths said: "With all the duties on beer, I think it is absurd that a pint of lemonade can be more than a pint of alcohol. High prices for soft drinks fly in the face of the Government's drink-drive campaign. If every pub followed the practices of the best, there would be no need for government action."

Although soft-drink sales in pubs are worth more than £1 billion a year, customers, he claimed, were offered little choice, poor quality and small measures. "I cannot instruct the pub trade to charge a certain amount, but I can force them to list their prices, though I am hoping some kind of agreement can be reached."

In some pubs, customers are charged the equivalent of £3 a pint for a bottle of mineral water. Some of the biggest mark-ups are for soft drinks mixed on the premises using syrup and carbonated water.

Mike Ripley, of the Brewers and Licensed Retailers Association, dismissed the complaint as "a very common moan and a very British one". He said: "If people want cheap orange juice, then they should go to the supermarket and not to the pub. Seats in pubs have certain costs, whatever the customer is drinking. But at



Griffiths said price of lemonade was absurd

Christmas and New Year there are all kinds of offers for drivers who are not consuming alcohol."

Mr Ripley claimed that a tour of any bar in the world would confirm that soft-drink prices in Britain were the cheapest. "I do not believe it is justified to say the price of soft drinks is hampering the drink-drive campaign."

Many pubs, he said, already displayed soft-drink prices and a general order would not be resisted by the trade. Already, after discussions with Department of Trade and Industry officials, some pub chains have agreed to reduce the price of soft drinks. One landlord said: "As usual, the politicians show they do not really understand the trade. Profit margins are low and we cannot afford to have office girls sitting down for an hour drinking orange squash at 10p a go."

Leading article... page 21

PINT OF WATER CAN COST UP TO £3

Beer drinkers in the South of England, where prices are higher than the rest of the country, can expect to pay between £1.80 and £2.20 for a pint of bitter, or between £2 and £2.40 for lager.

But a teetotaler whose tippie is tonic water or ginger ale would need far more money to have a good time.

At the Old Rose pub in Wapping, East London, his pint of ginger ale would cost £2.80.

Mineral water would set him back between £2 and £3, and orange juice up to £3.40.

A gin and tonic averages

out at about £1.90, while a half-pint of orange and soda will set the customer back 90p.

A customer would have to fork out about £1.20 for a small whisky, while a modest slump of sherry will cross the counter for £1.40.

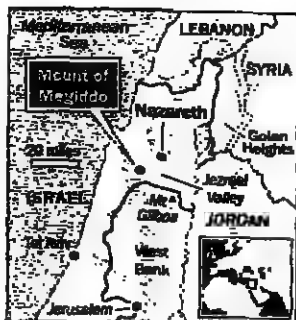
At the Abercrombie in central Manchester, a pint of ale costs £1.50 and a pint of lager £1.70.

A small bottle of orange juice will sell for the equivalent of £3 a pint.

A gin costs £1.36 and the tonic to go with it 73p. Drinkers of mineral water will pay the equivalent of about £2.50 a pint, while a small whisky is £1.36.

— Moët & Chandon. Turning nature into art —

Millennium doom at site of Armageddon



The end of the world is virtually nigh, Christopher Walker reports



ISRAEL is to use the latest in computer technology to provide millions of pilgrims flocking to the Holy Land with the ultimate experience at the spot marking the world's ultimate battlefield.

The biblical site of Armageddon, which in Hebrew means the Mount of Megiddo, is to be transformed for the millennium into an "intellectual theme park" where pilgrims will experience the final battle between good and evil that many Christians believe will signal the end of the world.

At present best known for its fortress-style maximum security prison housing hundreds of Palestinians accused of terrorist offences, the site of the apocalyptic vision outlined by John on the island of Patmos in Revelation, the last book of the New Testament, is set to become one of the most coveted spots for those seeking a special religious experience in and around 2000. As one headline put it: "Israel plans a hell of a party at Armageddon."

At a cost of millions of pounds and in co-operation with the computer giant IBM, Israel will begin work next month in creating what the planners describe as a "virtual Armageddon" on the historic mound of stones and palm trees overlooking the spectacular Jezreel Valley where the final battle is supposed to be fought.

Standing astride the great trunk road known to the Romans as Via Maris, from Egypt in the south to Syria and former Mesopotamia in the north, it has throughout the ages been the scene of mighty battles.

These ranged from the bloody encounter between the forces of Pharaoh Thutmose III and a coalition of Canaanite kings in the 15th century BC, through the biblical clash between the Israelites and the Canaanites recounted in the Song of Deborah (Judges 5) to the heroic defeat of the Turks at the

end of the First World War by General Edmund Allenby, later to become Lord Allenby of Megiddo.

With a combination of computer graphics created in a system known as "magic windows", holograms, sound and light shows and the imaginative siting of 14 new multimedia "visitors' centres", the project involves a controversial attempt to bring the past alive while trying to put flesh and blood

of the project is Zeev Margalit, who is aware that cynics and religious purists alike are dubbing the ambitious scheme "Apocalypse" and accusing the planners of cheapening the extraordinary past of Armageddon.

Sitting in his Galilee office perched over the Jezreel Valley, with Nazareth clearly visible some 20 miles away and Israeli warplanes roaring overhead on their way to bombing missions in Lebanon, the only sound disturbing the bucolic calm, Mr Margalit said: "We will not allow this to become a Disneyland of the Apocalypse. The orders are to maintain a fine balance between culture and emotion and to avoid the result being kitsch."

A secular Jew working for the Israeli equivalent of the National Trust, Mr Margalit, 40, is keenly aware of his responsibility in interpreting events for Christian believers for whom Armageddon has an awesome significance.

"If what many of them believe is true, this office could be the last place on Earth left standing," he joked, thumbing through a sheaf of plans. "I know there are many Christians not convinced that the forces of good will necessarily triumph over those of evil."

The religious significance of Megiddo to Christians around the world was signalled in 1964 when it was chosen as the spot for the historic meeting between President Shazar of Israel and Levi Eshkol, the Prime Minister, with Pope Paul VI, whose fleeting 11-hour stop in the Jewish state was part of the only papal visit to the Holy Land in recent times.

Although the current Pope has yet to announce whether he will follow in his footsteps, Israel is preparing for up to ten million pilgrims between now and the end of the millennium year — the Vatican has declared it a "sacred duty" to visit the Holy Land in the

Let all who live in the land tremble. For the day of the Lord is coming... like dawn spreading across the mountains, a mighty army comes, such as never was, nor ever will be in ages to come.

on the words of Old Testament prophecy in Joel 2, 1, describing the future battle meant to usher in the end of days: "Let all who live in the land tremble. For the day of the Lord is coming... like dawn spreading across the mountains, a large and mighty army comes, such as never was of old, nor ever will be in ages to come." In charge



The Death of King Saul, by Gustave Doré. Saul perished in the Jezreel Valley after an attempted attack on the Philistines from Mount Gilboa. The Philistines entered the valley from Megiddo, now being transformed into an "intellectual theme park"

years 1998-2001. "We expect an increase of visitors to the Christian holy sites in Israel in the next few years," said Archbishop Libero Ambrosio, the man responsible for Catholic pilgrimages for the millennium.

Mr Margalit said: "What we will be offering will be unique, although an experiment with the computer technique we will be using — much more advanced than the 'virtual reality' of today — has already been made at an imitation medieval village in Belgium."

His spartan office once housed the famous University of Chicago team which pioneered archaeological

work at Megiddo between 1925 and 1939. The shaded tennis court they left behind is still witness that excavating 6,000 years of history comprising 20 super-imposed cities was not all work and no play.

Megiddo was abandoned in the 4th century BC and never resettled. Should the lure of this doom-laden biblical site, along with the more conventional venues of Bethlehem and Nazareth spark the imagination of Christians worldwide, Israel has devised an emergency scheme to house pilgrims in tented cities and kibbutzim if numbers exceed the five million now expected to make the journey to the Holy Land.



Pope Paul VI and President Shazar of Israel at Megiddo, 1964

Jesus was born in 12BC, astronomer says

New calculations suggest we are almost a decade into the next century, Richard Owen writes

JESUS CHRIST was born 12 years earlier than is believed, according to a leading Italian astronomer, and we have just lived through the year 2009.

While the Western world celebrates Christmas and the arrival of 1998, Professor Giovanni Baratta has also revised conventional thinking on the reign of the Emperor Augustus and the origin of the Star of Bethlehem.

"Those who fear the Third Millennium can sleep safely in their beds," he said. "The year 2000 has been and gone. We are in the last days of 2009 and about to enter 2010." He admits this is not the first time Christ's birth has been re-dated. Johannes Kepler, the 17th-

century astronomer, suggested Jesus was born seven years earlier than thought.

But Professor Baratta, 55, an astrophysicist at the Rome Observatory, said he had discovered new evidence after "many years of study", drawing on biblical sources, Roman history and astronomy. The most crucial errors had been made in the 6th century AD by the Scythian monk Dionysius Exiguus,

known in English as Denis The Little. Denis, an accomplished mathematician and astronomer, arrived in Rome after the death in 496AD of Pope Gelasius the First, who had summoned him to re-organise the pontifical archives. In 525AD he drew up the calendar which became accepted throughout the West. But Denis, the professor says, failed to take into account the Year Zero —

between 1BC and 1AD — and also ignored the four-year period when the Roman Emperor Augustus was on the throne (81-27BC) under the name Octavian. Denis also omitted the first two years in which the Emperor Tiberius ruled after Augustus, his stepfather, died in 14AD.

This seven-year error would appear to support Kepler's theory, Professor Baratta says. On the other hand, Kepler's evidence rested mainly on his identification of the Star of Bethlehem as described by St Matthew. Kepler concluded, Professor Baratta says, that this referred to the conjunction of Jupiter and Saturn in 7BC. But in

redoing Kepler's calculations, the professor had discovered serious discrepancies.

Professor Baratta's research pointed to 12BC, when an unusually bright and fiery "travelling star" had appeared between the constellations of Gemini and Leo. "It was in fact a comet, and was observed by the Chinese as well as by European astronomers of the time."

He admits his evidence is "not conclusive. But all the data lead me to conclude that Christ was born 12 years before we think he was. This does not affect our belief in his divinity this Christmas, but it does affect our calendars."

Bhutto plan to weed out corruption

Karachi: Benazir Bhutto, the Pakistani opposition leader and a target of corruption allegations, yesterday proposed a national plan to beat corruption.

She said large investors viewed Pakistan "as a land to avoid, not invest in, as our institutions are deemed beyond repair".

She proposed that anyone elected to public office must declare all financial holdings. She also called for better wages for government employees and for stiffer penalties for corruption in the civil service.

Ms Bhutto, twice elected Prime Minister of Pakistan, was sacked by President Leghari in November last year for alleged corruption and misuse — allegations she denies. Mr Leghari was forced to resign this month in a power struggle with Nawaz Sharif, the Prime Minister.

At Pakistan's request, Swiss authorities have blocked around Sfr 20 million (£3 million) held by her and her family. (Reuters)



Benazir: wealth frozen in Swiss banks

Arafat angry over West Bank claim

FROM ROSS DUNN IN JERUSALEM

YASSIR ARAFAT strongly criticised Binyamin Netanyahu yesterday for declaring that the West Bank was an integral part of the land of Israel. The President of the Palestinian Authority said the statement was "dangerous", and meant that the Israeli Prime Minister believed the West Bank was part of the Jewish state.

Mr Arafat said he would never give up his claim to any part of Jerusalem. He said: "We will not accept the Judaisation of Jerusalem or the ceding of one grain of soil of holy Jerusalem." Mr Arafat was speaking to reporters in Gaza City on his return from talks with President Mubarak of Egypt in Cairo.

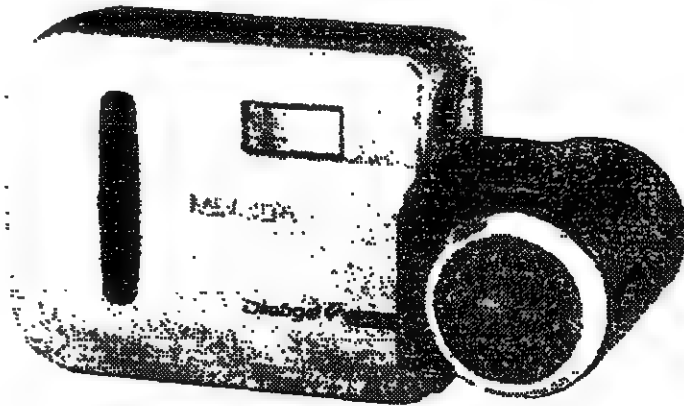
Mr Netanyahu told Jewish journalists in Jerusalem last week that the West Bank was "part of Israel proper". He

said most European countries tended to interpret Israel's struggle in terms of their own colonial past. "Most of them think that Judea and Samaria [the biblical names for the West Bank] is some colony like Algeria or possessions in Africa and of course neither is true, neither in the geographic nor in the strategic nor in the national sense," he said.

"We don't have a body of water separating Judea and Samaria — the West Bank — from Israel proper. It's in the centre of the country."

Mr Netanyahu's communications director, David Bar-Ilan, said that the Prime Minister's comments had been misinterpreted. What was intended was that Jews had strong ties to the area since biblical times when it was the heart of the kingdom.

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Tensions darken festive mood in Bethlehem

LIFE in Bethlehem has become insufferable for many members of the dwindling Christian minority. Increasing Muslim-Christian tensions have left some Christians reluctant to celebrate Christmas in the town at the heart of the story of Christ's birth.

"I do not dare to go out on Christmas Eve any more. The Muslim boys call me and the other Christian girls whores. They spit at us, try to force us to wear headscarves and in the [Islamic] fasting month of Ramadan that begins in a few days, the Palestinian police even arrest us for smoking or eating on the streets," said Lina Atallah, receptionist at the Salesian Convent and Church on a street scarred with intifada slogans.

Decimated by emigration and for the past two years living under the Muslim-dominated Palestinian Authority, Bethlehem's Christians now make up less than a third of the 30,000 population, compared with 80 per cent during the period of the British Mandate which ended in 1948.

In the so-called Greater Bethlehem, which had only five mosques in 1970, there are now 72. Manger Square, the area in front of the Church of the Nativity, is packed with Muslim worshippers every Friday because there is no longer enough room for all of them to pray inside the imposing Mosque of Omar.

When Diana Saman was a child in the 1950s, homes in her street only 300 yards from

Alleged intimidation by Muslims has made many Christians reluctant to celebrate the birth of Jesus in public, writes Christopher Walker in Bethlehem

the square, the focus of world-wide televised Christmas celebrations on December 24, were bedecked with colourful lights and carol singers went from door to door. Today, most of her neighbours are Muslims, and when lights are hung outside they herald the start of Ramadan.

Like many Bethlehem Christians, Mrs Saman, 42, no longer celebrates Christmas in public. "It does not feel like Christmas. I would rather stay home," she said. Her sentiments were echoed by Ranna Najjar, another Christian housewife in the West Bank town where the Muslim birthrate far outstrips that of the Christians. "The city is not ours anymore. We gave up the city," she said.

Ms Atallah, 38, regrets returning from Texas to Bethlehem after the 1993 peace treaty, which ended 27 years of Israeli military rule there.

"The Muslims want to get rid of us. They want us to live like them. The Jews put up road blocks and stop us even going to the holy places in Jerusalem without a special permit," she said. "Life for the Christians in Bethlehem is like being in a cage."

In Beit Sahur, an Arab village at the centre of the Christmas story, being the spot where the Angel visited shepherds to tell them of Christ's birth, Muslim-Christian tensions are even greater. In August, a mob of 200 Christians stormed the local police station manned by Palestinian Authority police after an Islamic militant attempted to enforce his strict dress code on a young Christian woman in a low-necked top. Seven people were injured in the ensuing fracas.

"Muslims in the city are fundamentalists," said one of the Christians involved in that protest. Christian anxiety was reinforced last Christmas when one Bethlehem Muslim prayer leader attacked Christian beliefs over the mosque loudspeakers. "Jesus is not the Son of God, he is an ordinary man. All the deeds that the Christians talk about are deeds of deception."

A report published two months ago by the Israeli Prime Minister's Office concluded that Christians are exposed to unceasing persecution under the Palestinian Authority. "Cemeteries have

been destroyed, monasteries broken into, and their telephone lines disconnected," the report says.

Dr George Carey, the Archbishop of Canterbury, said after a visit to the Holy Land in 1993: "My fear is that in 15 years, Jerusalem, Bethlehem — once centres of a strong Christian presence — might become a kind of Walt Disney Christian theme park."

His vision of the birthplace of the Christian religion becoming a place where outsiders tend the shrines for the sake of visiting pilgrims only is becoming more a reality with each celebration of Christ's birth.



Dolls of the infant Jesus at a souvenir shop in Manger Square, Bethlehem. The square is now regularly crowded with Muslim worshippers



Seasonal decorating in Manger Square

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Iraq faced threat of nuclear attack

PENTAGON planners briefly considered the option of using a low-yield tactical nuclear bomb against Saddam Hussein's biological weapons in Iraq, according to an American television network.

The weapon, known as the B61, which has been developed since the Gulf War, is designed to penetrate deep into underground bunkers and — with an explosion that generates heat up to 20,000°F (7,600°C) — to incinerate germ-warfare agents.

The B61 was considered, said NBC News, because even if US forces knew where to strike they do not have a conventional weapon that can reliably destroy biological agents in contact. Secret tests proved that dropping conventional bombs on biological targets would probably backfire, spreading a deadly plume of germ-laden fallout.

Fear of a political backlash led to the nuclear option being ruled out, officials told Jim Miklaszewski, NBC's Pentagon correspondent. That leaves a brutal and sustained conventional bombing campaign as the primary option for American war planners, should President Clinton give the go-ahead to use

Pentagon considered using new bunker bomb to destroy germ weapons, Ian Brodie writes

force in response to Saddam's refusal to co-operate with UN weapons inspectors.

US intelligence officials were said to believe that the chances of success now are no better than during the Gulf War when, according to a CIA report, American bombs failed to destroy a single biological weapon in the Iraqi arsenal.

If there is another air campaign, US bombs would probably be aimed for the first time at Iraq's oilfields and at Saddam's Republican Guards, who do much to keep his regime in power.

All these revelations were part of an in-depth analysis by NBC of the threat posed by Saddam as he continues to defy the UN Security

Council. Among its other findings were that Saddam, now 60, consolidated his power at a meeting of the Baath Party in 1979 when he pointed out people he saw as disloyal. After each was escorted from the room, they were shot.

A brief video clip of the scene from CIA archives was shown. Saddam's behaviour was described by Anthony Lake, Mr Clinton's former National Security Adviser, who said: "With a look on his face like that of a boy tearing the wings off a fly, he took a cigar and moved it around his subordinates, picking out those to be taken away on the ground of treachery. He was enjoying every minute of it."

Saddam favours Armani suits, Cuban cigars and gold-plated pistols, but is more interested in his place in history as a great Arab leader, "the next Nebuchadnezzar", than any earthly pleasures.

American spy satellites are constantly trying to listen in to Saddam to pinpoint his location. When they succeed in intercepting his words, the voice print is sent to Menwith Hill, the secret American listening post near Harrogate.

Saddam, obsessed with his own security, never sleeps in the same



Saddam chairs a meeting of his security council at the weekend amid claims that Iraq had struck a new food for oil deal with the UN

place two nights in a row. He has four rings of protective troops around him, with his presidential bodyguards at the centre. The obsession has led over the past two years to Saddam putting his wife and two grown-up daughters

under house arrest. In a fit of pique, he had the Ferraris and Mercedes of his elder son Uday set on fire.

Saddam is seen as wavering between two factions in the Iraqi power structure as he tries to win relief from UN economic sanctions.

One is confrontational, the other more diplomatic and includes Tariq Aziz, the Iraqi Deputy Prime Minister.

□ Nicosia: Iraq's trade minister, Mehdi Saleh, said yesterday that details of a new plan to distribute

aid under its oil for food scheme would be sent to Kofi Annan, the UN Secretary General, in the next few days and that Iraqi oil exports would resume as soon as it was approved (Michael Theodorou writes).

State in unholy row over godly motto

FROM TUNKU VARADARAJAN IN NEW YORK

A POTENT brew of theology, law and atheism is bubbling provocatively in a small federal courtroom in Ohio as a civil liberties group seeks to abolish the state's official motto — "With God, All Things Are Possible".

The case, which is being argued before US District Judge James Graham in Columbus, has been brought by the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU), which is leading a nationwide crusade to secularise public life.

If successful, the lawsuit could revive the campaign to abolish all use of the American national motto, "In God We Trust".

The suit was filed by the union after George Voinovich, the Governor of Ohio, announced plans to engrave the state's motto on a granite tablet at the front of the Ohio Statehouse, on South High Street in Columbus. He had just returned from a trade mission to India, where he observed the words "Government Work Is God's Work" at a ministry building in Delhi. Inspired, he returned to Ohio with a desire to emulate the Indians.

This enraged the local representative of the ACLU, who argued that the motto is unconstitutional because it violates clauses in the First and Fourteenth Amendments of the US Constitution which prohibit the "establishment of a religion by government".

Thomas Kasulis, Professor of Religious Studies at Ohio State University, argued that the motto had a "universal meaning about the limitations of mankind". He said: "It means we cannot control everything. Some people call it luck. Some people call it fate. Some people call it God."

The motto lawsuit is one of four battles being conducted by the ACLU against various American institutions. In other examples, it has sued the city of Stow, in Ohio, for using a municipal seal that depicts the Bible and a crucifix; taken a Florida county school board to court for including Bible studies in the school curriculum; and secured an injunction in Alabama against a state law allowing prayer in public schools.



Yilmaz believes future lies with the West

US seeks to defuse Turkish quarrel

BY MICHAEL BINYON DIPLOMATIC EDITOR

TURKEY'S quarrel with the European Union may be the biggest challenge Britain faces as it presides over the opening of talks with new applicants.

Furious at being cold-shouldered by the EU Luxembourg summit, Turkey announced it would break off all talks with the union and threatened to integrate northern Cyprus with the mainland. Ankara has also revived a threat to block the expansion of Nato by refusing to ratify the admission of any new members.

The Turkish parliament called at the weekend for an emergency debate, in which both the Left and Right may endorse calls for a freeze in relations with Europe, a formal withdrawal of Turkey's membership application, a tough new line on Cyprus and stronger ties with Iran and Turkey's Islamic neighbours.

Mesut Yilmaz, the Prime Minister, insisted on Saturday that the future of his country lay with the West. But he has given warnings that the parliament was likely to take a harder line, and would link EU membership with Nato enlargement.

Mr Yilmaz sought President Clinton's support at the weekend for Turkey's integration in Europe during a visit to America. Washington is alarmed at the sudden worsening of relations between Turkey and Nato's EU members, and does not wish to jeopardise the future of important Nato bases in Turkey.

President Clinton urged Mr Yilmaz not to abandon his quest for EU membership, and America is now looking to Britain to find a way to soothe Turkish anger before talks open with other EU applicants in March.

New technique aborts foetus at eight days

New York: A Texas doctor has pioneered a technique that enables women to have abortions as early as eight days after conception (Tunku Varadarajan writes).

The method, devised by Dr Jerry Edwards, medical director of the Planned Parenthood Federation of America, incorporates a hand-held syringe that draws out the gestational sac. The technique avoids using a vacuum pump, employed in conventional abortions undertaken at a more advanced stage of pregnancy.

Speaking to *The New York*

Times, Dr Michael Burnhill, vice-president for the federation's medical affairs, said: "For most women, the sooner they know they're pregnant, and the sooner they decide what to do, the better. With these early abortions, we're talking about a whole gestational sac that's the size of a matchstick head. It's nobody's picture of a little baby sucking its thumb."

Until now, doctors have balked at performing abortions before six or seven weeks because of the lack of accurate early pregnancy tests.

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Nation loses faith in God and turns to police for moral guidance

Every year Helmut Kohl has foreign correspondents around to his office for coffee and cakes. This Christmas the Chancellor was on better form than usual, handing out nuggets of folk wisdom and declaring that the 1998 election campaign would be fought on "values" rather than on material issues.

German voters would be urged to show solidarity and also to accept their civic responsibilities. Not once during this 90-minute rambling discourse did Herr Kohl — chairman of the Christian Democratic Union

INSIDE GERMANY



BY ROGER BOYES

— utter the word "Christian". Perhaps the Chancellor really does want, as the Turks claim, to make the European

Union into a Christian club. But the fact is that Germany is rapidly losing its Christian identity, as is the Chancellor's party. There is talk of the missing "spiritual" element to the European Union yet there is almost no input from the organised Christian churches. In 1970 there were 28.3 million Protestants and 27.2 Roman Catholics in West Germany. By 1989 this had dropped to 25 million and 26 million respectively. After unification, the decline accelerated.

Although the East German democratic revolution was hatched in churches, the level

of knowledge and interest in organised religion was very low. Even after the collapse of communism, eastern Germany has remained a largely secular region. Only four million out of 15.5 million inhabitants are members of an organised religion.

The result is not exactly a heathen society but certainly one where churches are scrambling to survive. Parish workers are being fired by the hundreds, pews are empty. Bonn officials moving to Berlin next year, when the capital shifts, have been looking in vain for

confessional schools for their children or even schools that offer serious religious education. In Brandenburg, the region around Berlin, there are only so-called LER classes — Lifestyle, Ethics, Religion — which are optional. Richard Schröder, the theologian, says attendance at these classes is like a visit to the zoo: a once-only experience to satisfy curiosity.

The churches have lost almost all influence on daily politics, even in Bavaria where the Christian Social Union occasionally takes issue on having crucifixes in classrooms or on a slightly

tighter interpretation of the liberal abortion rules. Attempts by the churches to launch a debate about the moral dimensions of unemployment were quickly ignored by the political class. Naturally Germany is not alone in becoming an increasingly secular society. But something important is withering away in the country: some call it communism's last victory.

A recent opinion poll asked who is most important in transmitting values. The police topped the list with 51 per cent, the political parties came next with 43 per cent.

Greenpeace scored 38 per cent and the churches were something of an afterthought with 37 per cent.

Anyone who has had dealings with a German policeman will find this a frightening statement. The absence of the organised churches from public debate adds to the weakness of the political class and aggravates social problems. It is difficult to disagree with Dr Jürgen Dittberner, political scientist at Potsdam University, who says: "The brutal racism shows what is missing in our society: a

credible transmitter of central social values." In this situation, says Dr Dittberner, it is disastrous "to shove the churches in a corner". The more thoughtful representatives of the left-leaning parties — who have made political capital in the past by hitting out at the organised churches — are thus now coming to the defence of the clergy.

"Germans have still not grasped that one of the main roots of their culture is breaking away," says Antje Vollmer, the Green MP who is the Deputy Speaker of Parliament.

Croat bombers pledge to drive out Nato troops

HARDLINE Croats in central Bosnia have vowed to continue intimidating Dutch troops in Nato's Stabilisation Force, whose marine units last week arrested two local war crimes suspects.

Over the weekend, a home-made nail bomb was thrown into a Dutch base in Busovaca, slightly injuring two soldiers. Many of the more than 200 troops were forced to take shelter in a bunker, the prelude to what promises to be an uncomfortable Christmas.

Outside the fortified gates of the Busovaca I camp, it did not take long to discover how far relations have sunk with the local population, many of whom fought in the Bosnian Croat army (HVO) and its associated militias. "If you don't leave now, I am going to blow you and your car up," a thug told us in the car park of the Ruliet cafe.

After a tense negotiation, in which he realised he was threatening not Nato troops but journalists, "Ivo" dropped his guard to give the Bosnian Croat version of recent history. Even though, over the next few days, three locals will return from The Hague tribunal to Busovaca and surrounding towns because war crimes charges against them were dropped for lack of evidence, he and his friends still take a dim view of international justice. The best news of the weekend was undoubtedly the nailbomb attack.

"I have been wounded by 20 pieces of shrapnel during the war and yet they have one small bomb in their base and they are panicking. Whoever cared what happened to me?" demanded Ivo, who was relaxed now among the plentiful beer, folk music and gillie calendars of another of his local haunts, the Kim cafe.

Ivo comes from the same mould as thousands of young Bosnians, be they Muslim, Serb or Croat. He has been fighting since 1993, when he



Tom Walker meets a thug in Busovaca who is ready to maim and kill in retaliation for the arrest of war crime suspects

was an 18-year-old recruit in the former Yugoslav National Army, keeping Albanians out of Serbia. As Yugoslavia fell apart, he joined the HVO, which cleansed swathes of countryside around Busovaca of Muslims. The latest enemies in his unrelenting cycle of violence are the Dutch living on his doorstep.

"What they did last week was inhuman," he said, regurgitating typical half-truths and lies that spread like wildfire among Bosnia's alienated populations. The latest rumour in Busovaca is that the wife of a Croat arrested by the Dutch was pistol-whipped

Serbs seek to end deadlock

SERBS continued their voting marathon yesterday, attempting for the fourth time in three months to decide who should succeed President Milosevic (Tom Walker writes).

Diplomats and government sources admitted that widespread ballot-stuffing and fraud may be ignored since the international community is as determined as Mr Milosevic's Socialists to stop the rise of Vojislav Seselj, the extreme nationalist Radical Party candidate for the presidency. His opponent in the run-off is the Socialist Milan Milutinovic.

Mr Seselj, an exponent of ethnic cleansing during the war in Bosnia, has been denounced as a fascist by Washington and as a threat to a peaceful Europe.

unconscious in front of her children. "I would kill them if they came anywhere near my family," declared Ivo.

He was brought up in Jajce, a Croat stronghold to the east that was overrun by the Serbs during the war. His family home is destroyed, his parents are dead and all his relatives and childhood friends are in Austria. Germany and Croatia. He has lost 40 per cent of his hearing because of a faulty rocket-propelled grenade, and one of his eyes is damaged.

Ivo's life now revolves around his wife and child, and heavy drinking sessions — up to two litres of brandy a day, he assured us.

There were no war crimes committed locally, he said. The infamous massacre up the road at Ahmici, where Muslim women and children were trapped in their homes and burned alive, never happened. Its alleged perpetrators, "The Jokers", were a "great bunch of guys".

For the HVO, Ivo killed "maybe one, maybe 50" Muslims. Cleansed, Busovaca was now "a great place to live in".

Further down a valley where Croats and Muslims are again killing one another, a Bosnian federation police source said we had been wise to leave Ivo swaying drunkenly in his favourite folk tunes. The only detail we had not been told, he said, was that it was Ivo and his gang who carried out the nailbomb attack — hurling it over the perimeter fence before hiding in the nearby bus station and that they were more than likely to strike again.

"Busovaca is their capital," he said. "They want the Dutch out of here."



Luciano Pavarotti yesterday en route to the Mostar concert on an RAF Chinook

Pavarotti brings musical cure

LUCIANO PAVAROTTI flew to the Bosnian town of Mostar yesterday where he topped a bill of celebrities at the opening of a music centre named in his honour.

The tenor raised £3 million for the centre, which will provide music therapy for the traumatised young survivors of the Bosnian conflict. Others on the bill included Bono, of the U2 rock band, members of the Chieftains, Brian Eno,

Sir Tom Stoppard and Bianca Jagger, all of whom have raised money for the centre.

Although suffering from flu — which prevented him from performing two concerts in Britain last week — Pavarotti insisted on making the journey.

Mostar suffered heavily in the conflict. Its famous medieval bridge between the Croat and Muslim halves of the city became a symbol of the struggle,

as citizens covered it with tyres to try to protect it from bombardment. The bridge did not survive but it is now being rebuilt.

Some of the guests flew from London to Bologna, where they joined Pavarotti, his partner Nicoletta Mantovani and other musicians. A short flight to Split was followed by a bumpy ride in two RAF Chinook helicopters to Mostar.

WORLD IN BRIEF

Abacha aide held in Nigeria 'coup plot'

Abuja: The Nigerian Army said yesterday that a coup plot had been foiled and a number of senior officers arrested, including Lieutenant-General Oladipo Diya, number two to General Sani Abacha, the military dictator. National television said two other officers, former ministers in General Abacha's Government, Major-General Abdulkarim Adisa and Major-General Tajudeen Olanrewaju, were also detained. They and General Diya are of the Yoruba tribe from southwestern Nigeria, a focus of opposition to General Abacha's rule. The television appeal for people to remain calm and go about their usual business.

Nigeria, Africa's most populous nation with more than 104 million people, has been ruled by military regimes for all but ten years since independence from Britain in 1960. General Abacha seized power amid political chaos after the annulment of a presidential election in 1993, but has vowed to restore power to civilians next year. (Reuters)

Air crash search hampered

Jakarta: Strong currents prevented searchers yesterday from recovering the wreckage of the SilkAir Boeing 737-300 that crashed into an estuary off Sumatra, Indonesia, on Friday. All 104 people on the flight from Jakarta to Singapore were presumed dead. The three Britons on board were Ruth Scott, 36, Eugene Clarke, 56, and Kenneth Wilson, 43.

'Mafia' priest returns home

Palermo: A priest who was expelled from Sicily last month after being accused of "complicity with the Mafia" returned yesterday to a hero's welcome when the expulsion order was revoked (Francesco Bongarraz writes). Don Mario Fruttica, 59, was charged with "aiding and abetting" Cosa Nostra after he admitted saying Mass for Pietro Aglieri, a Mafia "godfather".

Freedom for corrupt leaders

Seoul: Two former South Korean Presidents, Chun Doo-hwan and Roh Tae-woo, will walk free from jail today. They were pardoned by Kim Young-sun, the outgoing leader. The decision was endorsed by President-elect Kim Dae-jung. Both men were convicted of embezzling \$900 million in slush money between them while in office from 1980 to 1993. (AFP)

Worm blinds 80,000 in town

Khartoum: Some 80,000 people in the southwestern Sudanese town of Raga have lost their sight due to an outbreak of river blindness, a health official said. Leila Abulnuf, who runs a programme to fight the disease, said 95 per cent of the 400,000 inhabitants were infected. River blindness is caused by parasitic worm transmitted by black flies. (AFP)

Film-maker commits suicide

Tokyo: Juzo Itami, right, the Japanese film director, committed suicide because of an imminent media report about his alleged affair with a woman, 26, a spokeswoman for his company said yesterday. Itami, 64, who won international acclaim for films such as *Tampopo*, *Oshichi* (*The Funeral*), and *Manzai no Onna* (*A Tough Woman*), died on Saturday after jumping from the roof of an eight-storey building. (Reuters)



Woman studio head dies

Los Angeles: Dawn Steel, 51, the first woman to become president of a Hollywood studio, Columbia Pictures, has died at a Beverly Hills hospital after a two-year battle with brain cancer (Ciles Whistell writes). During six years at the top of her profession, Ms Steel supervised production of such hits as *The Accused*, *Fatal Attraction* and *When Harry Met Sally*.

Avian flu claims third death

Hong Kong: A girl, 13, has become the third victim to die here of avian flu (Jonathan Mirsky writes). There have now been eight confirmed and two suspected cases. Three young cousins who have the virus live with a grandmother whose neighbours claim she brought home dead chickens from a rubbish tip.

Botha gets on his bike and steers clear of truth commission

FROM RAY KENNEDY
IN JOHANNESBURG

P. W. BOTHA, the former South African President, is doing well on his exercise bicycle after hip replacement surgery but is getting no closer to testifying before the Truth and Reconciliation Commission about apartheid human rights abuses while he ran the country.

At the weekend, Frank Kahn, the Attorney-General for the Western

Cape province, ordered police to investigate criminal charges against Mr Botha, 81, over his failure to obey a subpoena to testify last week.

It was the third occasion that Mr Botha, head of state from 1984 to 1989 and Prime Minister for six years before that, had spurned the "circus" headed by Archbishop Desmond Tutu. The previous time, Mr Botha cried off because of his surgery.

Mr Botha, quoted yesterday by the Afrikaans-language newspaper *Rap-*

port at his home in The Wilderness, a Western Cape coastal village, said: "I respect the laws of South Africa and I don't think of myself as above the law. That is the correct attitude."

His statement implies that he is prepared to appear before a court to explain why he refuses to testify before a commission that he claims wants to humiliate him.

Mr Kahn has given Mr Botha's lawyers until Friday week to provide additional information before any

decision to prosecute. Under the commission's mandate, Mr Botha could face a fine of 20,000 rands (about £2,400) or up to two years' jail.

Meanwhile, thousands of delegates at the African National Congress conference in Mafeking, North West Province, have dispersed after cutting Winnie Madikizela-Mandela's political ambitions down to size.

In elections for the ruling party's 66-member national executive she

came fifteenth, ten places lower than at the party's last conference three years ago. The result came after humiliation in Mrs Mandela's attempt to become the ANC's deputy president.

In a final weekend vote delegates gave a resounding endorsement to the party's growth, employment and redistribution strategy based broadly on free-market economic policy.

Leading article, page 21

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محکمان الدول



Cream silk rosebud dress with frills, £1,170; cream linen frilled cardigan, £462

Now that the Benidorm set has discovered cruises, the term "cruise wear" has lost some of its cachet. The window displays in Knightsbridge, complete with Louis Vuitton trunks, were much more enticing five years ago, when two weeks' meandering around the Caribbean was part of the social calendar, not an alternative to a fortnight in Lanzarote.

But if wealthy women are now more likely to be found at the K Club than on the *Canberra*, they are still buying cruise wear. The concept was pioneered in America, where designers realised that women were not content buying their clothes in two batches — spring and autumn. Mid-season collections are catching on here, but American names still predominate.

Now John Galiano, the British designer who already produces six collections a year (two ready-to-wear and two couture collections for Dior, plus his own label) has come up with a "John Galiano" mid-season line. All the elements of his look are there — the Spanish-influenced lace-work, a reminder of Galiano's Gibraltar parentage, the bolero cardigans, suits cut to emphasise hourglass figures, draped backs and fronts, veriginous belle époque necklines, oriental jacquards, tiny slip dresses. In some ways, it is a sort of "greatest hits". The little flowered frock is very like the one worn by Kate Moss in last summer's gypsy collection. The pink shawl dress is a synthesis of Galiano's exquisite chinoiserie without the complexity of some of his show pieces.

But it does differ from the main collections. First, Galiano has introduced stretch into the skirts, which improves the fit and means that the jackets can really be bought off-the-peg, with no

Cruise wear may have lost some of its cachet, but Style Editor Grace Bradberry finds that the mid-season collection is catching on

need for alterations to achieve that ultra-tight Galiano look. Secondly, there are plenty of knitted fabrics, so there are evening dresses for less than £700. (Some may find this a curious definition of economy, but these pieces are Fashion History in the Making.)

But Galiano is not for the pragmatic. His clothes are about fantasy, romanticism and sumptuous fabrics. They are certainly not for penny-pinchers — nor pound-pinchers for that matter. Each of the main seasonal collections has a "story" behind it — that of a Russian émigré, perhaps, or B-movie actress. The mid-season collection has no narrative, but was inspired by a book published last year: *Photographs from Storyville, the Redlight District of New Orleans* is a moving, evocative volume of pictures by an American photographer, Ernest J. Bellocq. His glass negative plates, taken in 1912, were rediscovered in the 1970s, and although the subjects are all prostitutes, Bellocq's lens transformed them into romantic, mysterious creatures.

If dressing like a whore does not appeal, then it is worth bearing in mind that the introduction of sex into fashion may be the only significant style innovation of the past 20 years. By turn of the century standards, we all dress like tarts now — not just those who wear Versace.

Galiano's greatest hits



Photographer: JOHN SMANNELL
Stylist: Deborah Brett
Hair: Richard Selby at Michaeljohn Management
Make-up: Jochen Fuchs at Michaeljohn Management
Model: Amy Wear at Select

All prices are approximate.
John Galiano's cruise-wear collection is stocked at:
Hemods, Knightsbridge SWS, 0171-739 1234;
Browns, 23-27 South Molton Street W1, 0171-481 7833;
A la Mode, Hans Crescent SW1, 0171-584 2133

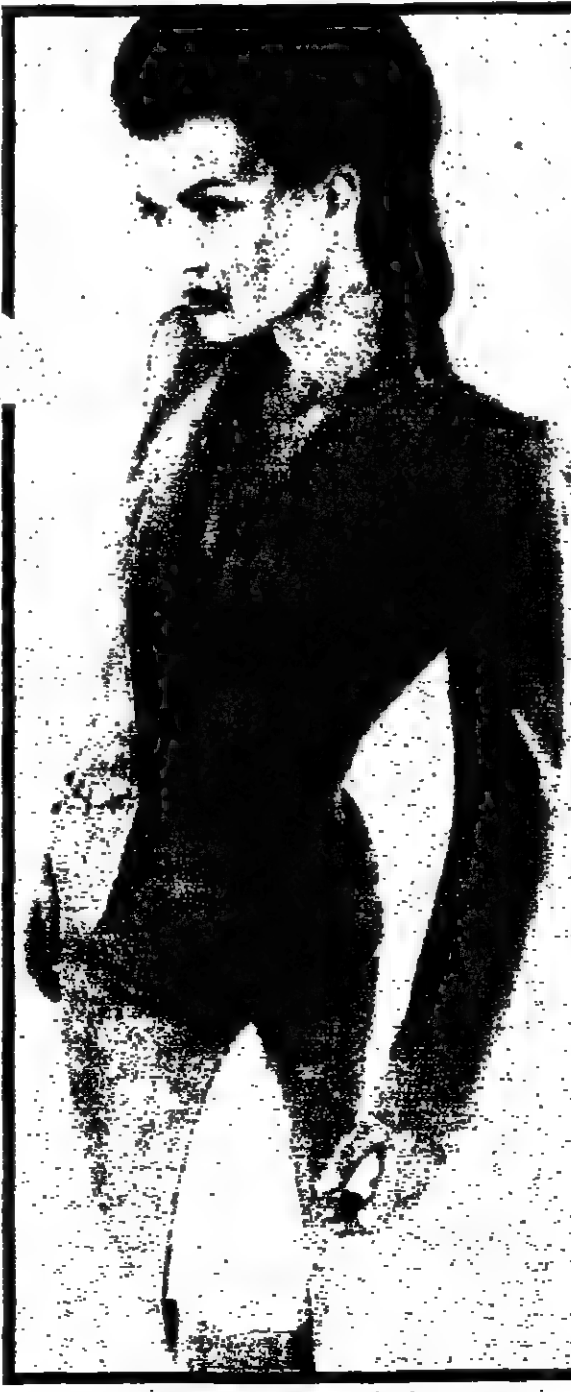
Burgundy silk lace dress, £2,190; burgundy flower comb, £229, by Philip Treacy, 69 Elizabeth Street, SW1, 0171-259 9605



Jacquard shawl dress, £1,040; feather hairpin, £149, from Philip Treacy, Suede stilettos by Manolo Blahnik



Black knitted draped-neck ruffle dress, £650; purple and green diamond earrings, £82, from Erickson Beamon, 38 Elizabeth Street, SW1, 0171-259 0202



Taupe one-button silk and linen jacket, £950, with matching stretch slit skirt for a sharper fit, £560, plus broderie anglaise underskirt

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GARRARD

In search of true north – and the man behind Halley's comet

Dr Toby Clark aims to retrace Halley's quest to chart compass variations. Anjana Ahuja reports

"You are to make the best of your way to the Southward of the Equator, and there to observe on the East Coast of South America and the West Coast of Africa, the variations of the Compass, with all the accuracy you can..." Royal orders to Sir Edmund Halley, secretary of the Royal Society

Sir Edmund Halley (1656-1742) is most noted for the comet that bears his name. Yet one of his greatest accomplishments, in the eyes of the astronomer's contemporaries, was his attempt to chart the "variation of the compass", now known as declination. This is the angle between magnetic north and true geographical north. Without it, sailors could not correct their compasses. It was therefore impossible to deduce longitude precisely and navigate the oceans.

So, in 1698, in the warship *Paramore*, Halley, one of only two men in the land paid to conduct scientific research, set sail for Madeira and the Cape Verde Islands, with the grand plan of charting declination for important ports in the North and South Atlantic. The trip was quickly aborted, because of crew insubordination, but Halley returned to the seas a second time.

The voyage took his crew, which included a one-armed boatswain famed for his good humour, to the Canaries, Rio de Janeiro, down past South Georgia (where the men

caught sight of Antarctica), up again via St Helena, thence to the Caribbean and Newfoundland, and back to England. From these travels Halley published, in 1701, *A New and Correct CHART shewing the VARIATIONS of the Compass in the WESTERN AND SOUTHERN OCEANS as observed in the YEAR 1700 by his MATTES Command*. More sophisticated successors to this primitive cartographic effort proved indispensable to seamen for more than a century, before a slow change in the terrestrial magnetic field rendered them inaccurate.

If all goes well, Halley's accomplishments will be celebrated once again.

Dr Toby Clark, a researcher at the British Geological Survey (BGS) in Edinburgh and a keen sailor, plans to commemorate the 300th anniversary of Halley's trip by retracing the route of the *Paramore*. Sir Vivian Fuchs, the man who led the first cross-Antarctica expedition, has lent his name to Dr Clark's effort to raise the estimated £70,000 needed.

Dr Clark became fascinated by Halley during a two-year posting to Halley Station in Antarctica, when he read biographies of the great scientist. "Halley led a remarkable life," Dr Clark says. "He was not only a respected scientist but also led expeditions. He was not just an astronomer but also did research in geophysics."

During his position as Astronomer Royal he mapped

"I am prepared to give up my life for eight months to do this"



Dr Toby Clark "Halley led a remarkable life. He was not only a respected scientist but he also led expeditions. He was not just an astronomer but also did research in geophysics"

the positions of the stars, but Halley, the son of a soap-boiler from Shoreditch, also found time to develop a diving bell and advise Sir Isaac Newton during his writing of the *Principia Mathematica*, the foundation of classical physics. Recreating the voyage, Dr Clark says, will afford Halley the recognition he deserves.

The present expedition, which Dr Clark has entitled "In the Wake of the *Paramore*", will also have scientific merit. Dr Clark and his crew intend to make the measurements that Halley made, but with far more precise instruments. Also, measurements need to be updated because the terrestrial magnetic field is slowly, but

constantly, changing (the magnetic North and South Poles have reversed several times during the Earth's history). The data should help to refine the existing mathematical model of Earth's magnetic field, called the international geomagnetic reference field.

"It is common to measure the size but not the direction of the magnetic field," Dr Clark says. "That's because you need to know true north to measure the direction. On our expedition, we can use global positioning satellites to determine that." The BGS and the United States Naval Oceanographic Office have offered to supply instruments.

By chance, a Danish satellite to be launched in May next year will take similar magnet-

ic measurements over the globe. Dr Clark hopes that his measurements will plug the gaps in coverage over the oceans, and he points out that it is useful to have ground-based measurements to compare to satellite ones.

It is easy to forget just how remarkable Halley's Atlantic adventures really were. It was the first dedicated scientific expedition on the seas, and Halley became the first civilian to be appointed a naval captain to pursue what many regarded as an obsession with declination.

The charts that he produced are also celebrated by cartographers — they are said to be the first maps that use lines to delineate physical quantities. The contours became known

briefly as "halleyan lines". Dr Clark possesses the optimism and credentials to make such a voyage a success. As well as spending two years in Antarctica and working in the geomagnetic group at the BGS, he has sailed the 8,000 miles from Rio de Janeiro to England. He envisages that the nine-month journey, starting in Greenwich next October, will be completed in four legs, with four sets of crew.

Does he share Halley's obsessive trait? "I am prepared to give up my life for eight months to do this, so I suppose some people might think I am obsessed. But I wouldn't want to sail across the Atlantic for no reason. Halley, and his fascinating life, have given me a purpose."

Magnetism and muscles

New study shows that magnets may hold the key to pain relief

It sounds like utter quackery — using magnets to relieve pain. However, scientists in America have published what they believe is tentative evidence to support the centuries-old claim that magnetism harbours medicinal properties.

Dr Carlos Valbona, of the Baylor College of Medicine in Houston, Texas, decided to test the remedy among former polio patients, who often suffer chronic muscle and joint pain. After gaining approval from a human experimentation committee, he enlisted 50 people to take part in a study. He then asked a local magnet manufacturer to make both active and dummy magnets that patients could not tell apart. The real magnets, which were provided free, were only slightly stronger than the refrigerator kind.

Twenty-nine patients were given real magnets and the remaining 21 had dummy devices. Before treatment, they were all asked to rate their pain on a scale from one to ten. They were then asked to apply the magnets to painful areas for 45 minutes. The patients were monitored to ensure that they did not try to find out whether their magnet was real or not.

As reported last month in the *Archives of Physical and Rehabilitation Medicine*, the 29 who were treated with a real magnet saw their pain drop from an average of 9.6 to 4.4. It was a startling result compared with the remaining patients, who saw their average pain score drop from 9.5 to 8.4. Some of the subjects said that the magnet banished pain from parts of the body quite far from where the magnet was applied.

The paper has astonished many medical experts, who would like to see the study repeated. After all, the test was conducted only once. However, Professor William Jarvis, a prominent critic of magnet

therapy and president of the National Council Against Health Fraud in America, is in favour of further investigation.

Dr Ann Gill Taylor, from the University of Virginia, has been watching the results with interest. Last month she began recruiting 105 volunteers for a similar study. She is focusing on whether magnetic pads used during sleep can alleviate the discomfort caused by fibromyalgia, a distressing muscle condition whose cause is unknown. Dr Taylor is also planning to test whether magnets can reduce the pain reported in phantom limbs by amputees. Her unusual research is being funded by the National Institute of Health, which has set up an office of alternative medicine.

Meanwhile, Dr Valbona, who admits to having used magnets to relieve knee pain, wants to carry out further studies to answer the many questions that his study has raised. For example, does magnetic strength matter? How long does the pain relief last? Does it wear off? Are there other medical conditions for which magnets might prove effective?

The Food and Drug Administration will also be watching with interest — it has warned doctors to treat health claims for magnets with extreme caution.

ANJANA AHUJA

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How fish perfect the art of deception to snare their prey

Love at first bite

IMITATION may be the sincerest form of flattery, but the sentiment is unlikely to appeal to males of a fish called *Rivulus*. They are the victims of a particularly cruel form of imitation, says the French ecologist Dr André Brosset, who has studied them at St Elie Biological Station in French Guiana.

A predator species called *Erythrinus* pretends to be a female *Rivulus*, attracting a hapless *Rivulus* male to perform a sexual display in front of it. No sooner has the foreplay begun than *Erythrinus* shows itself in its true colours, catching its victim by the tail and swallowing it.

The phenomenon, reported by Dr Brosset in a recent issue of *Ethology*, is a particularly neat form of aggressive mimicry, a behaviour widely found throughout nature. The closest parallel is the cleaner fish of the Indo-Pacific, so called because it removes parasites from the skin of other fish. The subreptitious blenny takes advantage of this practice by

pretending to be a cleaner fish, even engaging in the same kind of dance. As soon as another fish lines up to be cleaned, the blenny bites off a piece of its fin and eats it.

Dr Brosset made his discovery when carrying out experiments in an aquarium at the research station. A dozen *Rivulus* algae of different sizes were being kept in a tank when it became plain that one, provisionally identified as a fe-



SCIENCE BRIEFING
Nigel Hawkes

male, was growing large by eating all the others. It was, of course, *Erythrinus* in disguise.

Experiments showed how the deception worked. *Rivulus* are much smaller fish, growing to about only two inches as adults, while *Erythrinus* reach at least six inches in

French Guiana. The deception therefore occurs when the *Erythrinus* are young, hardly any bigger than an adult *Rivulus*. At this stage in

their lives, the predator fish have the same black patches behind the gills and at the root of the tail as the females of the prey species, as well as the same herringbone pattern in the rear of the body, and the same stripes on the fins.

Dr Brosset found that the match was close enough to fool the male *Rivulus* into making sexual advances. If they were big enough compared with the predator, they got away with it; if they were the same size or smaller, they were eaten. Females were also attracted by *Erythrinus*, but here the sexual come-on was ineffective. The predators simply chased the female across the tank trying to catch them by the tail.

In practice, loss of the males may not be quite as damaging to the *Rivulus* as it might appear. They live in harems, with two or three females and a highly aggressive male, and the reduction in the number of males may actually help to keep populations stable and healthy.

Dangers of space debris

THE launch of a manned spacecraft is no longer the most dangerous part of the mission, according to a report published last week by the US National Research Council. Simply floating about in space is more perilous because of the growing risk of being hit by debris.

Forty years of space exploration has left millions of pieces of junk — satellites, nuts and bolts, even tiny

flakes of paint — in orbit around Earth. Add to that the natural hazards of meteoroids and dust, and the risks become significant.

When the space shuttle was designed in the 1970s, this was not taken into consideration. A fragment half a centimetre across travelling at a speed of 17,000mph could make a hole the size of a fist in the shuttle's crew compartment or wing. Radar can detect bigger chunks, but 95 per cent of the material is too small to spot.

The NRC recommends better surveillance, altered flight rules, and extra shielding on parts of the shuttle.

Barking up the wrong tree?

PEOPLE often convince themselves that their pets can talk, but scientists are usually more sceptical. An exception is Professor Con Slobodkin, of Northern Arizona University, who has spent the past ten years trying to learn the language of prairie dogs. He sits in a tower in the pine forests outside Flagstaff and records their calls, the *Boston Globe* reported recently.

Careful analysis of the sounds shows, he says, that there are different alarm calls for different threats. When a hunter approached the colony, the response was different from that elicited by an unarmed man. Distinctive calls were also recorded when the colony was threatened by hawks, coyotes or domestic dogs.

He believes that prairie dogs have a vocabulary running into more than 100 words; but finds it hard to convince other scientists. "I'd say 25 per cent think my findings are interesting," he says. "The others are either agnostic or outright disbelievers."

Self-help: does anybody need it?

Giles Whittell discovers the secrets of writing self-help books, while Jane Shilling analyses their advice and concludes it is not worth having

Diane Reverend was a mere editor at Random House in New York when she first saw a manuscript by an unknown pop psychologist, Dr John Gray.

"I took one look at the title and knew it would be a number one bestseller," she said, chuckling. Last week, she was right. *Men Are From Mars, Women Are From Venus* has sold 6.4 million hardback copies so far. The desperately understanding Dr Gray is now a multimillionaire and Diane Reverend has her own imprint.

Dr Gray's slim volume on how to bridge communication gaps between the sexes is the unofficial mascot of a huge and expanding self-help industry that may, as its insiders claim, answer some of Americans' myriad yearnings for betterment. It also feeds off those yearnings, creates hundreds more and — not incidentally — props up the entire world of New York publishing.

Eat More, Weigh Less. How To Make Anyone Fall In Love With You. 14000 Things To Be Happy About. As Britain is learning, the genre can fill entire walls with tomes as quackish and histrionic as their counterparts — but there are worse. For every self-help title published, thousands are rejected as too derivative or specialised. This is no small mercy, given that *Sinus Survival and Six In The Bed* (Parents, In-laws and their Impact On Your Marriage) both made it into print.

Unsolicited manuscripts do get read, but "blowhards don't fool anyone", as one seasoned self-help professional put it. Nor does literary talent help. As a new breed of heavyweight editor-cum-agent goes looking for the next lightweight blockbuster, prose style is the last thing on anybody's mind.

Marketability is everything. "How promotable is the author? What's the hook? Is it universal enough?" Ms Reverend rattles off the key questions, then admits: "If someone comes to me with a really catchy title, that's two thirds of the battle won. You know you can reach people."

Another of her star authors is Laura Schlessinger, a purveyor of no-nonsense bullet points on relationships and family via a syndicated radio talk show.

"I heard her show early on

and I knew at once there was no way it wasn't going national," Ms Reverend says. Ms Schlessinger had no track record as a writer but she did have a title to zap you where it hurts: *Ten Stupid Things Women Do To Mess Up Their Lives*.

Crucially, she also had the potential for a built-in advertising blitz over the airwaves, so Diane Reverend signed her. The book has sold more than two million copies (and has inevitably spawned a companion volume for men).

Definitions of the self-help genre broaden as each new fad finds a market. Under its vast umbrella come certain staples too lucrative to ignore — money, diet, fitness, beauty — but also highly specific niches such as ageing, arthritis and marrying the right guy. As baby-boomers start coping with their parents' deaths, and their own, dying is another growth area.

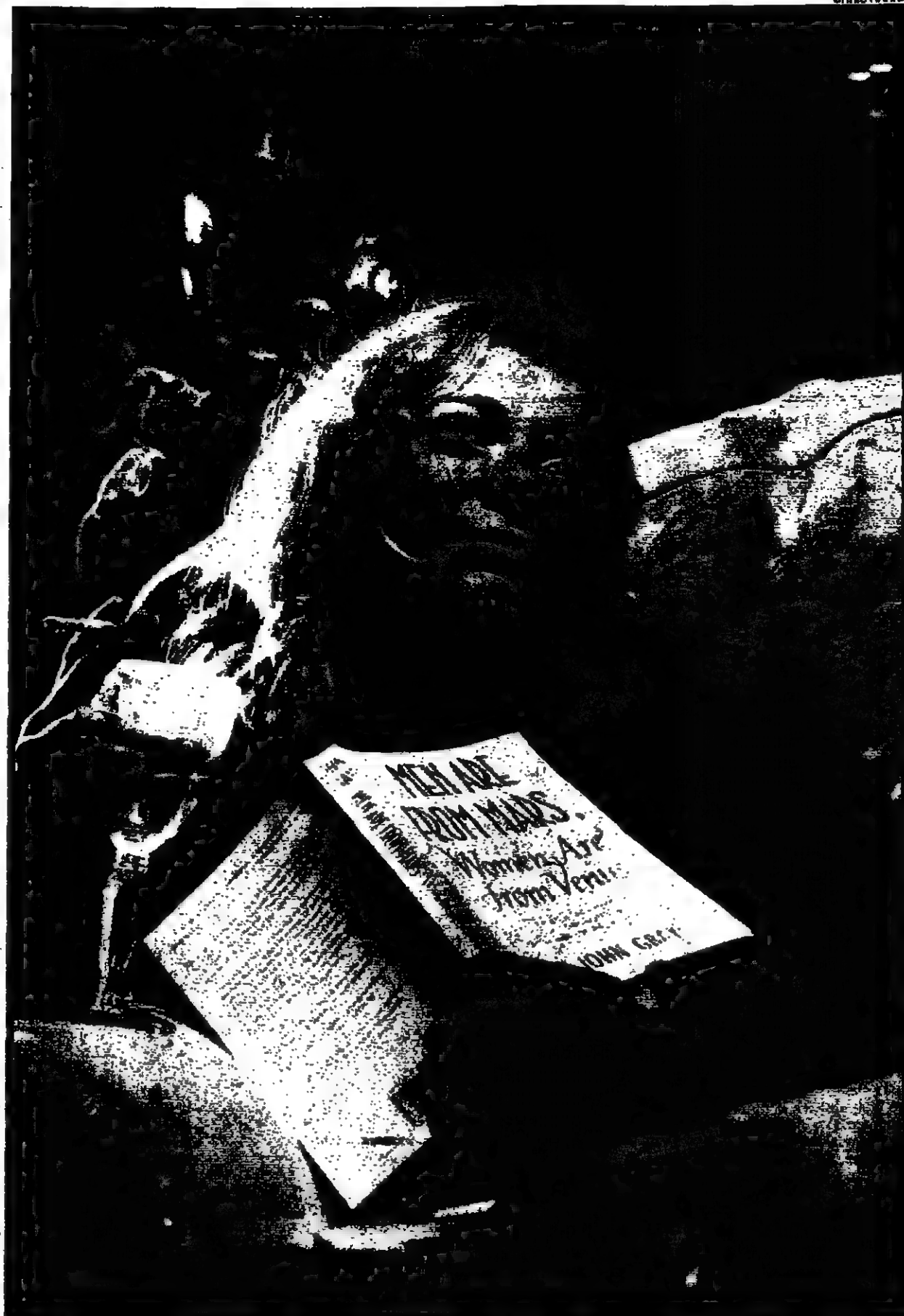
The reigning queen of self-help is a hyperactive Dallas agent who sticks to the three broad categories of finance, relationships and health. But more than anything she sticks to sales potential.

"Forget the bookstore," says Jan Miller, who represents two of President Bill Clinton's favourite motivators. "It's all about distribution now." To make an impact in the information blitz that is now part of American life, Ms Miller's authors must be promotable on everything from infomercials to greetings cards. Book tours are for mere novelists.

It all started in 1979, when she lured Arnold Schwarzenegger out of a Dallas bookshop, where he had signed 150 copies of his latest fitness book. She took him to a sports shop, where she made him sign copies for a queue of 3,000 people. Eighteen years on she has shepherded 150 titles into print, 20 of which became *New York Times* bestsellers.

Her current authors include Anthony Robbins (*Unlimited Power*; two million copies) and Stephen Covey (*The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People*; 280 weeks on the bestseller list). Both were summoned to nurse Clinton's wounds at Camp David after his 1994 mid-term election rout.

Ms Miller says her authors must have media nous and be



If you are not dysfunctional when you begin reading a self-help volume, you will be by the time you stop

ambitious, with a "platform" — their own show, a seminar series, a pet issue. A stable of ghostwriters will handle the text if necessary. She has 40 titles in the pipeline for next year, and Manhattan publishers are scrambling for her new books and authors.

One such author will be Jesse Brown, a successful Texan stockbroker who has never

written a book in his life but happens to be black. "There was never a black face interviewed on television when the markets dived last month," Jan Miller observes. She saw a niche, and has signed Brown up for television, video and speaking, deals worth "in the low six figures".

Another up-and-comer, Ms Miller swears, is Ella Patterson, a teacher who self-

published a sex education book for girls and sold 70,000 copies out of her car boot. Thanks to Ms Miller, Ms Patterson now has a seven-figure deal for lectures, television and radio appearances. Oh, and that book.

Being a self-help author is not for the faint-hearted. It is for people like Jake Steinfield, a

television fitness guru who made Harry Evans, the former head of Random House, do ten press-ups in front of his entire sales force to help to promote a Steinfield book.

The book was not about fitness, the author explained, but the ability to get the president of a company down on the floor doing press-ups. The sales people loved it.

St Augustine, the patron saint of self-help, knew the syndrome well. "Oh, God," he prayed, "Give me chastity — but not yet."

But now it is that time of year when bad old habits are replaced with shiny new aspirations — a flatter tummy, a fatter bank balance, a nice new boyfriend (or any boyfriend at all) and, of course, complete spiritual calm in all circumstances.

Force your way into any bookshop during the few remaining shopping days before Christmas, past the shelves full of gastro-porn (fricassee of snails with a fennel garnish), the survival manuals (fricassee of worm with a fennel garnish) and the diet books (fricassee of fennel, no garnish) and eventually you will stumble on a throng (or encounter group, as you will shortly be learning to call it) of youngish women (intense and drooping, or Chanel-suited with an invisible lapel badge reading "I Am Nearly 35 And I Still Haven't Had A Baby") and the occasional sheepish bloke.

What they are all doing is buying for their best friends the book that will change their lives. Their best friends, meanwhile, are on the other side of town buying the same book for them. In 1998, they will thus be able to form a support group. This will be referred to by their husbands/boyfriends/batmans as "Ruth's night for Getting Silly with Angela", but Ruth and Angela will, with their newly acquired self-knowledge, be empowered to deal in a mature, humorous manner with this childish belittling of their personal goals.

Self-help books have various things in common. They all claim, like alchemists of old, to be able to turn leaden unhappiness into the gold of personal fulfilment. They are all by "bestselling" authors — and those authors are mostly American, which can mean a shock for the inhibited British psyche. Within the genre there are three main categories: how to smag a mate; what to do with him once you have got him; and *Advanced Spiritual Exploration*.

Prominent among the *First Catch Your Chap* manuals piled high in my local Waterstone's are Sharyn Wolf's *Guerrilla Dating Tactics* (Thorsons, £6.99), "the definitive guide for singles", and Ellen Fein and Sherrie Schneider's *The Rules 2* (Thorsons, £6.99). "How To Make Mr Right Desperate For More", Sharyn and Ellen and Sherrie all have "wonderful husbands", and thus presumably know what they are on about. Any attempt to

combine the contradictory advice contained in their books, however, is likely to lead to entry into an enclosed order.

The Rules 2 is, like *The Rules*, all about discovering your Inner Prom Queen. Don't date him, don't pay for dinner and if he doesn't hurry up and propose — Next!

Guerrilla Dating, on the other hand, recommends adopting a persona like that of Goldie Hawn crossed with the bloke in *The Fast Show* wearing the Chris Evans wig and indefensible braces. Be wacky! Be original! Drop a dahlia in his drinking water and once you've lured him into your flat, surprise him with a wicker clothes basket full of assorted condoms.

Faced with this sort of thing, it is perhaps not surprising that "how to improve your relationship" manuals are written mainly by men. Dr John Gray's *Men Are From Mars, Women Are From Venus* (Thorsons, £6.99), is stuffed with case histories, charts and aphorisms ("never go into a man's cave, or you will be burned by a dragon"). But its conclusion is, broadly, hold your tongue, and if, by chance, he should remember to put the seat down, be

grateful. Or else, Susan Jeffers and Daniel Goleman square up to the big question: what is nice for? Their approach is quasi-scholarly. Jeffers, in *End the Struggle and Dance with Love* (Coronet, £3.99), relies on Buddha, Nikos Kazantzakis, Pook and Figlet; while Goleman (*Emotional Intelligence* from what he facetiously refers to as "a welter of self-help books" with the help of Aristotle, William Styron and Ulf Dimberg of the University of Uppsala. In either case, if you were not dysfunctional when you began reading, you will be by the time you stop.

So, you may think, away with all this transatlantic self-obsession. What about something really uplifting? Patience Strong may be a mouldering in her grave but her spirit lives on in her namesake, Sir Roy, whose meditation on happiness, delivered as the 19th Thomas Baggs Memorial Lecture at the University of Birmingham last year, has fortunately been preserved in a slim volume by Long Barn books (£7.99).

Happiness for Sir Roy lies in the simplest things: "English farmhouse goodies, stored in neat rows in the cupboard"; shy approaches from admiring members of the public, cats with funny names (Lady Torte de Shell). Hark! Is that Julie Andrews I hear carolling in the distance?

JANE SHILLING

Kathleen Simons enters a world of conspiracy and intrigue when she goes in search of Laa-Laa and Po

Why my Teletubbie cost me a million pounds

You have to keep things in proportion at Christmas. A new frock for the office party is about 2½ times more important than food. Getting the forgotten 14lb organic turkey out of a butcher who closes early on Christmas Eve versus a 20 per cent discount on raw materials — what would you say, about four times? And two Teletubbies for a two-year-old grand-niece versus the success of a multi-million-pound sale? Off the scale.

I started the Teletubbies hunt in November. I was told that if I were prepared to queue from dawn on a Saturday outside Toys 'R' Us there would be a chance.

I have not seen a Saturday in the UK for eight weeks because I am always off seeking new markets for my wiggins. And I could not find anyone daft enough to queue for me at any price. A friend of a friend knows someone at Harrods who tells people they are "coming in" and that he will put one by, but I have not yet heard of one "going out".

So when I set out last Wednesday to look for Laa, late-postable presents for godchildren, I really had given up on the Teletubbies. A harsh wind was

shooting the snow horizontally along the King's Road at 8.30am. You know we're in a boom because none of the shops in the King's Road opens until 10am. So along with all the other desperate, toothless, chilled-to-the-bone people, I sat disconsolately drinking cappuccinos until they opened.

Daisy and Tom's had a plastic Teletubbie bathmat. In a cringing voice, I whispered: "Um, I don't suppose you have any of the, um, real thing, do you?"

I have now said this to more people in more shops around the world than I have air miles. You get a shrug at best. Usually a laugh; that is to say, one shop assistant laughing to another at me.

This assistant didn't laugh though. She said: "Well, not at the moment." At the moment? I shrilled for too loudly. Does that mean that there could be a moment when you might have some? She pulled me behind the Picture Books for Older Children, looking over her shoulder.

"Maybe..."

"When?"

"Today?"

"Any time now, actually."

At that point my mobile rang. The sales director said a deal was falling through. Big money was at stake. What should he do?

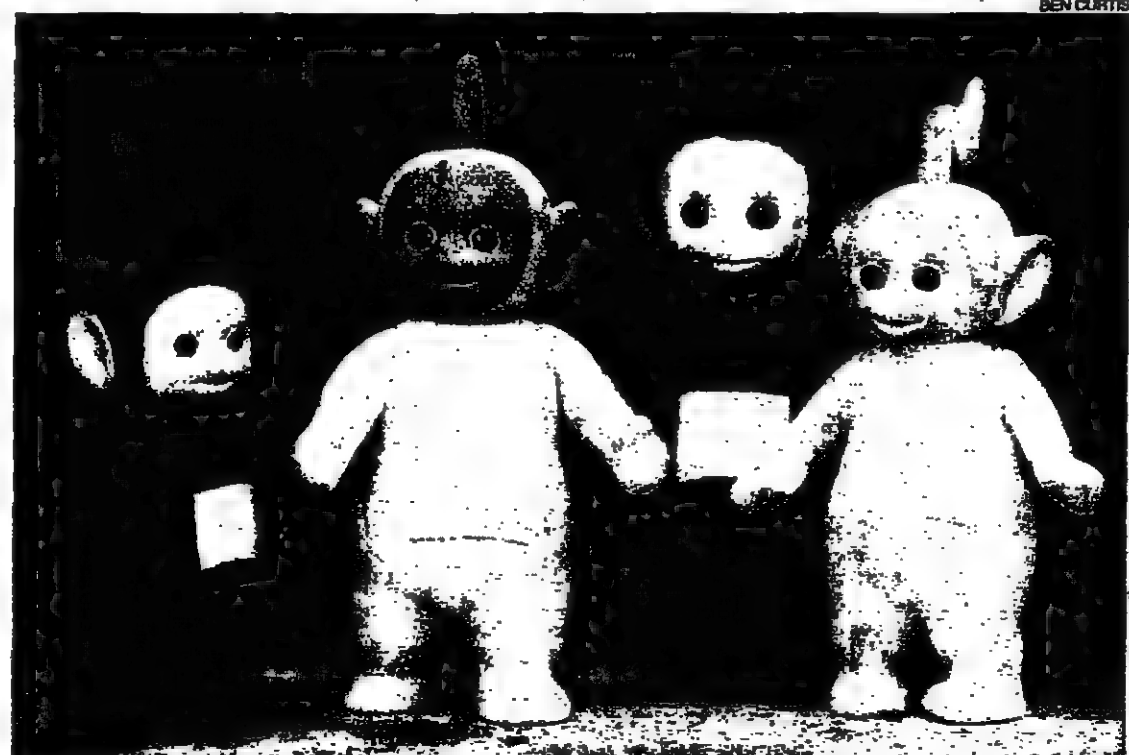
"Don't bother me. I'm in negotiations for a..."

"Sssh." The assistant winced.

"Don't say it out loud."

"... for a thing. An important thing." I pressed the off button.

We were now co-conspirators, the assistant and I. The rest of the shoppers — at that time not many — must not know, she said. There would be pandemonium. One woman was



Absurd objects of desire tell the sales assistants you want to buy a Teletubbie and watch them laugh

prosecuted last week for fighting with another when she pinched Tinky Winky out of her trolley. We were talking war.

Other young sales assistants also knew a shipment had come in and were nodding and winking at each other. "Follow me," I heard a manager say to a group of them as she headed for the stock room. "Bring your prices. We are going to save the world." Yes, she really said that.

I pretended to shop for half an hour, then I sidled up to the till. Out of the corner of my mouth I asked if you know, they had arrived? How did I know? asked the cashier. First Assistant admitted that she had told me. Then, because I was part of the inner circle, they told me they had yet to unpack and price them, which would take another half hour. More nodding and winking.

I went for another cappuccino. A

Danish. Another cappuccino. A croissant. I always eat when I'm nervous. First Assistant passed, nodded and winked. Not yet, she mouthed. But the runner factory was at work. One or two assistants were walking about like FBI men, ready to run, control the stampede, fetch the police.

The mobile rang again. Why wasn't I dealing with the crisis, the office wanted to know. But I am dealing with a crisis. Go away. Finally I approached First Assistant. "I have to go," I said. "Any chance of one from the back, you know, in a plain brown wrapper?" She took pity on me. Turned to a more junior person. "This woman," she said, "has been waiting an hour and a half for them. Put them in a bag — in the back — and bring them out under cover."

He went. He came back. There was

a sudden, awful realisation that they would have to go through the electronic till. A description of the item, plus the price, came flickering up. An intake of breath. Grabbing a brochure from the counter, I slipped it against the revolving till to hide the T word. They exhaled.

Finally it was in the bag. Literally. Back out into the snow, warm and smiling. Into the car before the T-T raiders, who no doubt had been lounging nonchalantly around the toyshop, could smell their prey.

The car phone rang. The deal was dead. We'd lost.

Lost? Who had lost? This was the best day of my life. I had won. As I said: you have to get things in proportion at this time of the year. Laa-Laa and Po are a thousand times more important than selling several million pounds worth of widgets to an Arab state.

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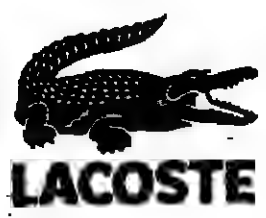
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LACOSTE

Playing the fool for the lords of misrule

In 1977 I saw the perfect Fool. It has been a long wait. Rather like Polonius, the Fool seemed to be one of Shakespeare's undables. Then Michael Bryant took him on in the Richard Eyre National Theatre production and at last I believe I saw the Fool as he was meant to be.

Bryant's performance was praised but not hugely celebrated because of the magnificence of Ian Holm's Lear. In Holm we had a double Lear, we had a truly shaking performance, and we had it from a man who was until recently racked with stage fright. The more you go to the theatre and the better you know the actors the harder it is for them to disguise themselves. Holm in *Lear* superseded this and as the confused, naked, ranting, wrong and wronged Lear he commanded almost all our attention.

And so Bryant seemed at the time to be the moon that paled before the sun. But time has leavened his performance in my mind. He has been so skilful so

often that we take it for granted, but as the Fool he was definitive. It is one of the hardest big roles in Shakespeare and it has the misfortune to be up against arguably the greatest role of all. But Bryant shone.

The Fool is counsel for on wit, he is knockabout comic and wise man. He is rude, he is warm, he is the alter-ego, the goad, the conscience and sad, sad, lost in the world reality which his master and friend the king abandons a few minutes into the play. But how on earth do you play him?

Somehow Bryant achieved him completely. He made the jokes work. He was Jack the Lad with his own stand-up at the court's Comedy Store. He was wise, and most of all, he was fearless with the unloosed monster monarch, risking whipping, distraught with the pain of

his own politic truth. He is a nag and a scold throughout but humour gives his complaints mustard and Bryant, full of theatrical cunning, digs and digs at his lost loved master to try to reel in his senses.

It was one of the most memorable performances of this or any year. Oddly, it is rather typical of the quietly brilliant career of Michael Bryant that such a feat should have occurred as it were almost in the shadow of another memorable performance. For years he has been consummate without that self-regard which is sometimes quickening but more often of passing interest.

Richard Eyre is making a film of *King Lear* and I look forward to it for Ian Holm of course — for the fury of the man. But equally for Bryant whom I saw, minutes after the play had ended, striding with

MELVYN BRAGG



anonymous speed along the pavement outside the theatre, quickly changed, job done. Fool cast off. But he had left me with a fulfilment of one of Shakespeare's most extraordinary creations.

At this time of year, in times past, when things were worse or better, the custom was to employ misrule. Masters, we are both reliably and unreliably informed, both pagan and Christian, were obliged to act as servants around the winking time of midwinter. Choristers elected a boy as a bishop. Status was reversed.

Did it really happen like that? Surely, one imagines, sycophantic servants will be rather lenient with masters whose boot could be back in their kidneys at the end of this extravagance. And surely the masters would form a masonry to go along with this custom for their own reasons — mainly the placating of old gods. But even if it was more mocked than marked, it was, I think, an idea of profound significance. Were it to be reinstated now it might well refresh the

social and psychological health of the nation. For I think it comes out of a deep understanding of the tensions in society — resulting from immovable hierarchies which to expose for a time can do nothing but good.

We all know that when a Caesar in Rome had his triumph through the city, he was accompanied by a slave, who reacted to the cheers of the crowd by whispering words of caution — that life was short, that glory vanished, that fame was a chimera. Who does that to our leaders now? Not only our political leaders but — perhaps more importantly — our business and corporate leaders. We have the newspapers of course, and they are vital here, but it is very easy for the top 0.1 per cent in our society to insulate themselves. Were the whole business to be turned upside-down we might slough off the

grudges that slow us down. So let's restore misrule.

Let secretaries take care of offices (often this would be merely public confirmation of what they do already). Let bosses fetch and carry, make tea, get some Christmas cards on the way in from the train. Let the weak experience strength and the strong weakness. It would, I suggest, prove a world more capable of cohesion than is possible in the stratified organisation of today. Our ancestors who practised misrule in midwinter knew that the most vital thing of all was to survive. What this did was help them to survive.

For centuries now we have swarmed along with only war to bring real coherence. Yet if old wars are gone, then how else are we to attain what has often been a cathartic feeling of knowing each other and being part of each other? Nothing binds a society together as much as realising what we all have in common. War does that. And next to war, perhaps, misrule, making society topsy-turvy.

The English rose blooms in time for uncle Oscar

The packaging may be the same, but a new Helena Bonham Carter inhabits her role in *The Wings of the Dove*. Matt Wolf reports

For years, it seems, Helena Bonham Carter was little more than a decorative preny face who looked good in Edwardian garb; a natural beauty who shone on camera without revealing much of a soul. Indeed, in the eyes of many, her gifts had less to do with acting than with projecting a fresh-faced sheen. She would never aspire to the theatrical heights of, say, Dame Judi Dench.

Still, it is the way of performers to surprise — after all, Emma Thompson had only fourth billing on the credits when she won her Best Actress Academy Award for *Howard's End* — and there can be few surprises greater than Bonham Carter's emergence over the past few years as a genuine talent. Now the 31-year-old actress has emerged as this year's front-runner for the Oscar for her performance as Kate Croy in Ian Softley's new film *The Wings of the Dove* in what looks to be a largely English race likely to include, you guessed it, Dame Judi Dench.

"Helena will win the prize," a well-placed film executive said last week, and Bonham Carter is generating the early head of steam so necessary for keeping one's name in the minds of the nominators and the voters. She has already been named best actress by film critics' organisations in Los Angeles and Boston, as well as by the National Board of Review. The influential New York Film Critics group gave her top prize to yet another Briton: Julie Christie, for the Alan Rudolph film *Afterglow*. On Thursday, Bonham Carter was nominated for a Golden Globe, where she goes up against Dench (for *Mrs Brown*) and *Titanic*'s leading lady Kate Winslet, as well as two Americans: Jodie Foster (*Contact*) and Jessica Lange (*A Thousand Acres*). "I find it a bit freaky," Bonham Carter says. "It's wonderful to get a pat on the back, to have that exposure and demand." As regards the Oscars, where she has already been on the giving end of an award, she says: "I won't say the big O word, although of course I just have. I'm thinking, 'Hold your horses, babe, just try to keep your feet on the ground.'"

Like many performers who come

belatedly into their own, a more mature Bonham Carter may simply be more suited to the medium. Last year she adjusted easily to the Shakespearean world of Trevor Nunn's otherwise ill-fated film of *Twelfth Night*, in which her Olivia caressed the verse as lightly as she did the face of Imogen Stubbs's Viola. Her ready charm as Richard E. Grant's put-upon girlfriend goes a long way towards enlivening a minor film such as *Keep the Aspidochelone*, while in Woody Allen's *Mighty Aphrodite* Bonham Carter proved that she can play New York neurotics in the best Diane-Mia tradition.

None of these films, however, anticipated her power in *The Wings of the Dove*, in which she plays a clever young Machiavelli who isn't above using a dying American heiress called Millie (played by Alison Elliott) in order to snare the none-too-wealthy journalist Merton (Linus Roache).

Film adaptations of works by Henry James have proliferated of late — this is the third one in 14 months, following *Washington Square* and *The Portrait of a Lady* — but Bonham Carter's performance is one of the few to capture the writer's ambiguous morality, which is as stealthy and shadowy as the characters' nocturnal trysts.

Bonham Carter admits to doubting that she could do it justice. "It's a very haunting story," she says. "My biggest question mark was whether anyone would care two hoots about Kate. I suppose you don't have to like characters in a novel, but you really do on screen. Rule No 1 says you do have to care about somebody."

It didn't help, either, that Bonham Carter was somewhat thrown by the original 1902 novel, which director Softley and screenwriter Hossein Amini have pushed forward to the London and Venice of 1910. "They pay me to read these novels," she laughs, admitting that James would not be her first port of call at a bookstore. "He writes so densely, it's hard to tell what he's really talking about. I just did not feel a sense of what he was going on about." The script, mean-



Helena Bonham Carter looks right in her latest film, *The Wings of the Dove*, and she acts right, too

while, "was very sparsely written, which was one of its strengths; it's the least wordy script I've ever done. That meant you had to bring a lot to it, and I had no idea if it was coming through."

If the moral complexity posed a challenge, so, too, did the period: Bonham Carter was aware that she risked becoming a cliché in the bustle, corset and parasol-laden milieu of costume drama. She was only 18, after all, when she abandoned thoughts of Cambridge in order to play the title role in Trevor Nunn's Reformations-era love story, *Lady Jane*. The former title followed: *A Room With a View*, *Where Angels Fear to Tread* and *Howards End*. Add her screen Ophelia (opposite Mel Gibson's Hamlet) and her partnership with Kenneth Branagh in *Mary Shelley's Frankenstein* and

there's no escaping the fact that Bonham Carter has played few contemporary roles: it's difficult to imagine her inhabiting, say, the film world of Mike Leigh, and she famously passed up the gruelling central role in *Breaking the Waves* that launched Emily Watson's career. "My overwhelming reaction [to *Wings*] was the Edwardian thing — that I'd have the same hair, the same frock, I thought, 'Don't do it. Hel, you've been there before.'"

Then, Bonham Carter decided, why not use age to her advantage? "Having got intrigued by the story, I thought that whoever plays Kate should not be under 25, or girlified. There is a maturity to her, a knowingness, and I was keen to play her with her hair down and not as an ingenue."

And historical parts are increasing-

ly becoming, well, history. Next year she will be seen in the film version of Alan Ayckbourn's *The Revengers' Comedies*, and early talk is of a second shot at the Oscar, based on reports from the set of her performance as a sufferer of motor neurone disease in *The Theory of Flight*. Perhaps it is time to conclude, and less carping in this country notwithstanding, that Helena Bonham Carter can actually act.

"I've learnt the long way round and probably had to bore everyone while doing it," she says. "I wasn't an instantly naturally super-talented actress. But now I do feel definitely more confident as an actor; a bit more legitimate, too. I'm not saying, hello, I can do it. But I might have just got it slightly right, I guess."

• *The Wings of the Dove* opens on Jan 2

Top-hole in a tent

"EVERYBODY worships me. It's nauseating," means Garry Esendine. And it's true, everybody does. Rich, charming and irresponsible, London's most sought-after actor has an infatuated deb in his spare room, a potty playwright bouncing around his studio, and the producer's wife is cheating with his agent in order to get closer to him. "The whole thing is very fragrant, isn't it, Garry?" says his former wife Liz.

Fragrancy, of course, is not being celebrated here. Close inspection of Noel Coward's characters reveals as much. Middle-age is creeping upon David Threlfall's Garry. The hair is thinning as quickly as the acting parts. And, although he's accused of over-dramatising his life, he can't compete with the friends and fans who monopolise his mornings and turn his Art Deco studio into something like Piccadilly Circus.

The most striking feature of Matthew Lloyd's cracking production is how he fits these morning glories into the Royal Exchange's marquee in Upper Campbell Market. With its silver-painted circle in the middle of the tent, squiggly ceiling designs, and no fewer than seven separate entrance points, Threlfall's set looks like a giant men's ash-tray. What's exciting is how this setting loosens up the play without losing a period that has come back into vogue.

The more Garry despairing

THEATRE

the people who want a slice of his private life, the more Threlfall warms to his task, swishing around in his collection of Chinese dressing gowns. But ironically the great breaker of hearts seems most comfortable with his formidable secretary, Monica (Amanda Boxer).

The comic turns keep the plot spinning, notably Tom Smith as the infatuated young writer with the faulty wiring. Smith turns hero-worship into an unbridled and truly inspired comic diversion. Laurence Kennedy, a new Donald Sinden in the making, turns Garry's agent, Morris, into a suave neurotic, bubbling with sexual angst.

However it's the three ladies vying for Garry's slippery heart who make our ageing hero writhe with horror. Kate Isira's feline, ingenue, Daphne, proves surprisingly resilient after her one-night stand. But the bitchy war of wits between Rachel Fielding's scheming Joanna and Geraldine Alexander's cucumber-cool Liz provides the most fascinating contest.

JAMES CHRISTOPHER

Back to its roots

NO, the Polka's version of *Puss in Boots* does not come with a leggy blonde in the role of the cat or some variant on Bernard Marmont, as the Ogre. Philip Pullman's adaptation and Vicky Ireland's production reach back into the roots of a tale which was, as it happened, written by Charles Perrault in the Sun King era.

That means a Monsieur Ogre out of Molière: in Peter Sowerbutts's performance, a paunchy sot and raddled, rouged old beau who wears 17th-century silks and a curly grey-black wig and is as obsessed with sating his tum as Harpagon with filling his moneybags. Even his feelings about the Princess are poised between heart and gut. If she won't marry him, well, he'll eat her.

Too sophisticated an approach for young children? On the contrary, these round me sat rapt through a clearly, briskly told story. Too squarish conceived, at least for those who expect their ogres to take more inhuman forms? Not when Sowerbutts is salivating over his "cuddly little fruit pie," as he calls Lisa Burrows's small, fierce Princess, and declaring he loves her "from the bottom of my stomach."

In any case Alex Bunn — also responsible for the toy-theatre designs — has pro-

duced some terrific ghouls for those with a taste for the grotesque. You remember that Jacques, the poor miller's son, has to face these creatures as he walks through the Gallic badlands to rescue the Princess from the Ogre? Here, he might be venturing onto a run-down planet on the edge of the conflicts in *Star Wars*.

The tattered inhabitants have vast grey heads with round, staring eyes, beaks for noses and bits of root and branch sprouting from their scalps. Nor do they have sci-fi credentials only. Any insomniac will identify with them.

Perhaps Carnegie-medallist Pullman gets a bit griggish and didactic as he pushes the point that a princess should value a peasant for his own qualities, not because a cat dressed as a cavalier has introduced him as a marquis. Still, the moral that "a noble spirit is more important than a noble name" isn't a bad one, especially in the Wimbledon area. And Ireland's cast, which also includes boyish Conrad Hornby and a feline Dale Superville, is the tops.

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Doubles toil into trouble

Late in the year, serious drama has arrived on Broadway. As the lights rise at Lincoln Centre on Ralph Funicello's set for *Pride's Crossing*, a white world of chenille bedspreads and wicker chairs comes into view. Behind billowing gauze curtains float ghosts in white Edwardian dress.

It's a world of American bluebloods, one that playwright Tina Howe (*Painting Churches*) knows well. Here a father, reprimands his son with "There'll be no Commodore's Race for you today!"

At the centre of *Pride's Crossing*, which is both a town and a metaphor for its heroine's pivotal achievement, is 90-year-old Mabel Tidings. Played by Cherry Jones with no make-up and, awkwardly, a quavering voice disconcertingly like Katharine Hep-

burn's, Mabel seems indomitable. In scenes that alternate with the present, Jones also plays a younger Mabel, modulating effortlessly to a sexy, strong-willed and wryly humorous woman. She decides to follow an ancestor and swim the Channel. To succeed, she battles parental opposition and contemporary notions of womanhood. "You are delicate," declares Kandis Chappell's frigid, one-dimensional mother, but Mabel ignores her.

Mabel's courage fails her in a more important matter. When her trainer and lover (David Lansbury) asks her to forgo the swim and run away with him, she lapses into the religious of her milieu. David is Jewish, Mabel chooses the

crossing — and, with it, a life of unhappiness.

But all around her others are trapped: her homosexual brother Frazier (Lansbury, doubling brilliantly), her life-long admirer Chandler (Dylan Baker), too unadventurous for Mabel, and her grand-daughter, Julia (Chappell again), who ran off with a Frenchman and is now made miserable by his infidelity.

Some of the scenes are achingly poignant, but there are annoying loose ends. Disastrously, the director, Jack O'Brien, has attempted gender-blind casting — Angie Phillips plays Mabel's older brother Phineas, indifferently and with a ludicrous moustache, and the brawny Baker dons dresses for two parts. The result is distancing for a play that needs to sustain a delicate mood.

Meanwhile, David Mamet's *The Old Neighbourhood* has arrived at the Booth Theatre. In the three one-acts, Bobby Gould, played by Peter Riegert with an air of bewilderment, revisits his best friend from high school (Vincent Guastaferrro); his sister Jolly and her husband (Patti LuPone and Jack Willis); and an old girlfriend (Rebecca Pidgeon).

Under Scott Zigler's direction, the actors seem to be reciting the dialogue, with two exceptions. Willis, given the fewest lines, uses his teddy-bear size to project decency and affection for his wife. And LuPone soars above everyone, engaging one's feelings for Jolly's life-and-death struggle to overcome her parents' emotional abuse.

EDWARD KARAM



Dylan Baker and Cherry Jones in Tina Howe's poignant examination of American bluebloods, *Pride's Crossing*

مكتبة الأمل

And then there was the sax...

As Sidney Bechet is celebrated on TV, Clive Davis revisits a legend whose life was as exuberant as his playing

If Woody Allen now spends so much of his time punishing himself with clarinet practice when he is not making films, the blame lies with the ghost of Sidney Bechet. As Allen and many other professional and amateur musicians can testify, trying to emulate "one of the most beautiful sounds in the world" is the stuff of obsessions.

A New Orleans Creole, Bechet lived the archetypal footloose jazz life. As a young man he played a command performance at Buckingham Palace before George V, served time in jail for a firearms offence and, during one fallow period in the 1930s, ran a tailor's shop in Harlem. He ended his days in his adopted homeland of France where he was feted as a hero in the decade before his death from cancer in 1959.

His picturesque career is celebrated tomorrow in *Treat It Gentle*, an Arena documentary on BBC2. Aside from the valuable contribution of Allen, producer Jo Lustig has rounded up a sturdy cast headed by Bechet's former protégé Bob Wilber, who sketched a wonderfully intimate portrait of the master, outside ego and all, in his autobiography *Music Was Not Enough*.

Broadcast in Bechet's centennial year (some commentators suspect his real birthday may actually have fallen a few years before 1897), the programme goes some way to restoring him to his rightful place in the pantheon. Though he was acknowledged by many as at least the equal of Louis Armstrong, his willful temperament — and his pre-

ference for the recalcitrant soprano saxophone — ensured that he never exerted anywhere near as much influence on his peers.

At the beginning of the Twenties, when Armstrong was preparing to form jazz in his own image, Bechet was wandering across Europe. In 1919 the Swiss conductor Ernst Ansermet was so taken by one of his performances that he wrote a glowing and oft-quoted article, *Sur Un Orchestre Nègre* ("I wish to set down the name of this artist of genius; as for myself, I shall never forget it — it is Sidney Bechet").

Duke Ellington, who regarded him as "one of the truly great originals", managed to tempt him into his orchestra in 1924. But Bechet, ever the maverick, moved on after a few months. Soon afterwards he returned to Europe as a member of the Revue Nègre, adding its new-found star, Josephine Baker, to his list of romantic conquests.

Lustig's film is handicapped by the relative shortage of archive footage of Bechet in his prime. But it comes alive with a glorious string of anecdotes. Who can forget the story of the hard-drinking actress Tallulah Bankhead summoning Wilber and her beloved Bechet to her hotel room, greeting them stark naked, and then asking them to serenade her with a blues at the foot of her bed? Even Woody Allen could not invent anything as vivid as that.

● Arena: *Treat It Gentle* — Sidney Bechet, BBC2, 11.25pm, tomorrow



Sidney Bechet's wedding in Juan-les-Pins, 1951: he had been engaged to his bride Elizabeth 23 years earlier, but she disappeared for 20 years

CONCERTS: Pianist and orchestra in perfect harmony; plus songs for a Christmas festival

Rich harvest

LSO/Otaka
Barbican

THE \$300,000 recently awarded to the 27-year-old Norwegian pianist Leif Ove Andnes by the American Irving S. Gilmore Foundation is given not for any single spectacular triumph, but after a period of long, continuous and secret assessment by a panel of roving spies. For Andnes that is particularly fitting.

His outstanding performance on Thursday of Rachmaninov's Third Piano Concerto, with the London Symphony Orchestra and Tadaaki Otaka, was the harvest of a slow and steady ripening. And the process is, of course, continuing. Each concerto he plays sounds as if it is being performed for the sheer love of the work, not because it has been requested or expected. And as the shoulders and the imagination broaden, so Andnes grows into the Rachmaninov.

Otaka set an easy, springing pace,

anticipating the next yet sensuous phrasing of Andnes's opening. As his solo theme returned throughout the movement, it became progressively finer, closer, more private, until it expired in three numb notes. The substantial virtuoso passages in this movement were seamlessly integrated, with the flying octaves and overlapping chords warm, full-toned.

Both here and in the slow movement, definition of melody and of texture was intensely musical. The Intermezzo's song was sung freely, but with a bold energy which made sentiment and the clichés of rubato totally redundant. And the little tumbling scherzo-like figures were played with exquisite lightness.

With the finale less the dash to the finishing post which it can so often seem, and more a self-renewing celebration of energy and imagination, the LSO was spurred on to its finest playing. Despite its recent demanding US tour, it seemed to have inexhaustible resources to spare for Rachmaninov's Second Symphony. With delicious solos from Christine Pedrill's cor anglais, Andrew Marriner's clarinet and Roy Carter's oboe, this was an exuberant performance to seal a memorable LSO year.

HILARY FINCH

Seasonal sounds

Henry's Eight
St John's, Smith Square

NOTHING, not even church music, is sacred when it comes to the commercialisation of Christmas. The rarified programme by Henry's Eight, given as part of the Christmas Festival at St John's, Smith Square, promised a refreshing change, and even the group's plugging of its recordings turned out to be low-key. Entitled *The Virgin and Christ-Child*, the concert focused on contemplative music of the Renaissance and 20th century.

But this was a less than perfect evening. Although Henry's Eight draws its members from Cambridge's best choral foundations — the octet is named after the founder of Trinity College, where it was formed five years ago — the sound here was disappointing. From curdled counter-tenor tone downwards, there were no outstanding voices, but that would have mattered less had they blended better.

JOHN ALLISON

Which is not to suggest that the men — two counter-tenors, three tenors and three basses — need to sing in a potentially bland homogeneous style. Just that the problems of intonation and ensemble would never have occurred had they really been listening to one another. In Heinrich Isaac's florid *Virgo prudentissima*, the rhythmic complexities remained just that, instead of receding into the background of this rich musical canvas. Traditional settings such as *There is no rose* and the *Cowenry Carol* do not call for over-interpretation, but nor do they need to sound dull.

In several pieces, the cool beauty of the music shone through regardless. Praetorius's *Es ist ein Ros entsprungen* was one, and the settings by French composers fared well: the singers caught the sensuous tone of Jean Mouton's *Nesciens Mater* and the tranquillity of *Agnus Dei* by Arcadelt. Walther's charming carol *Joseph lieber, Joseph mein* was one of the evening's highlights. The 20th-century carols by Britten, Alan Ridout and Bernard Naylor received depressingly ragged performances, but the group showed the better sense of style in Warlock's magical *Berthelem Down*, the encore.

Folk's back home

JAZZ

Emil Viklicky
Quartet
Riverside, W6

ALL over Europe, jazz musicians are turning increasingly to indigenous folk material for inspiration. Performing as part of "Made in Prague", a week-long festival of Czech culture, Olomouc-born pianist Emil Viklicky set himself firmly at the heart of this trend by drawing on Moravian folk sources for his quartet's music at the Riverside Studios, featuring Zuzana Lapcikova's cimbalom (hammer dulcimer) and vocals alongside a conventional jazz piano trio.

Cautionary tales from the Napoleonic Wars concerning girls who go into the woods with soldiers, plangent romantic laments, peacocks as springboards for surprisingly vigorous variations in which Viklicky's piano teased lively jazz improvisations from the pure, clear folk melodies.

Viklicky himself is a wonderfully lyrical yet robust pianist, his playing packed with dynamic and textural subtleties, so it was particularly frustrating to have him restricted in this studio venue

to a typically unresponsive electric instrument. But his interplay with drummer Laco Tropp and bassist Petr Dvorsky was characteristically sensitive. Typically, Lapcikova would sing a faintly melancholy air over the gentle grace and filigree delicacy of her cimbalom, then the variations, drawing on all manner of jazz-related forms, would explore the theme's rhythmic and harmonic possibilities.

While folk elements are thoroughly and naturally assimilated into the quartet's jazz-based approach, their use of cimbalom anchors their music firmly in the Moravian tradition. "Roots" music it may have been, but it was also superb jazz.

CHRIS PARKER

This week in THE TIMES



THEATRE

The Natural Theatre Co's fruity *William Tell* can be tasted at the Purcell Room
OPENS: Tonight
REVIEW: Wednesday



DANCE

The Royal Ballet brings *The Tales of Beatrix Potter* to the Festival Hall
OPENS: Tomorrow
REVIEW: Friday



FILM

The Spice Girls make a bid for cinematic fame with their movie *SpiceWorld*
RELEASED: Friday
REVIEW: Wednesday



OPERA

Anya Kubrick is the witch in Palace Opera's *Hansel and Gretel* in the QEH
OPENS: Boxing Day
REVIEW: Mon, Dec 29

PLUS: One-man-band Karl Wallinger's *World Party* at the Mean Fiddler

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THEATRES

The more we are together

Vernon Bogdanor on the start of a British revolution

The Scotland Bill, published last week, inaugurates a constitutional revolution in Britain. It provides for proportional representation and a fixed-term parliament, and it will create in Scotland a new and quasi-federal system of government.

In theory Parliament remains sovereign and free to pass laws regulating Scotland's domestic affairs. In practice, Westminster will hardly be able to exert its supremacy against an Edinburgh parliament which will see itself as the sole interpreter of Scottish opinion.

Britain has previous experience of devolution. In Northern Ireland between 1921 and 1972, there, too, Westminster's supremacy was more nominal than real. In 1922 the Northern Ireland Government proposed to abolish proportional representation in local elections, something it was entitled to do under the 1920 Government of Ireland Act. The British Government sought to veto the measure. When the Northern Ireland Government threatened to resign, the veto was withdrawn and the measure became law.

Northern Ireland had sought devolution to preserve the union with Britain; the motivation was centrifugal, whereas in Scotland it is centripetal. It will be even more difficult, therefore, for Westminster to exercise sovereignty over Edinburgh than it was over Stormont.

Devolution is, in theory, merely a delegation of power. In practice it will lead to a division of power between Edinburgh and London, the former being responsible for Scottish domestic affairs, the latter for foreign policy, defence and macroeconomic policy.

Scotland will come to resemble a province in a federal state and Westminster will be able to exercise its supremacy only under pathological political circumstances, such as occurred in Northern Ireland with the breakdown of civil order in the late 1960s. Thus the sovereignty of Parliament in Westminster, which has hitherto been a real power to legislate for Scotland, becomes the nebulous and uncertain supervision of another legislative body. Power developed will be power transferred.

The Scotland Bill is revolutionary in another respect. The Scottish parliament is to be elected by the German system of proportional representation, by which every elector will have two votes, one for a constituency member and one for a party list. A high position on the party list will normally guarantee election. It will be a new experience in Britain for members to be elected to a legislature without having to face the electorate.

For the European Parliamentary Elections Bill, Jack Straw, the Home Secretary, has agreed to consider a proportional system under which electors can vote for an individual candidate on a list, rather than simply accepting the order decreed by party headquarters. Donald Dewar should do the same for Scotland.

Unlike the Commons, the Scottish parliament will be elected for a fixed term of four

years, with dissolution possible only under exceptional and clearly defined circumstances. Thus the relationship between the Scottish executive and Scottish parliament will be quite different from that between the British Government and Westminster.

Under PR, Scotland will almost always have coalition government, something unknown at Westminster except during wartime and economic emergency. Coalitions, however, can always crumble in mid-term. A Labour-SNP coalition, for example, might well fall apart after two years. The danger then would be that, without a majority and yet unable to dissolve, there would be governmental stagnation in Edinburgh rather than the strong leadership that Scotland needs.

Devolution, moreover, affects the government of the whole country, not just of Scotland. It is unlikely to stop with the creation of a Scottish parliament and a Welsh assembly. Already there are signs of a demand for a Northern assembly from those fearful that a Scottish parliament will divert resources away from Newcastle and Liverpool. Labour is committed to creating such regional assemblies where there is evidence of a settled demand.

Devolution, the Welsh Secretary Ron Davies has declared, is a process and not an event. He is right. The centrifugal forces which are leading to the creation of a parliament in Edinburgh and an assembly in Wales are likely to exert a similar pull in those parts of England which feel most remote from Westminster. The outcome could well be, as it was in Spain, the transformation of a unitary system of government into a thoroughgoing quasi-federal state.

This prospect need not necessarily be viewed with alarm. Britain is by far the most centralised state in Western Europe, and one of the most centralised democracies in the world. There are, therefore, positive gains to be derived from a policy of decentralisation and the dispersal of power which devolution makes possible.

Or need devolution threaten the unity of the country. Indeed, given that there are powerful centrifugal forces at work in modern Britain, it might be that the best way to strengthen national sentiment is to give way to these forces a little the better to disarm them.

Scottish devolution, like Irish home rule a century ago, forces us to come to terms with the key question of how political societies are held together. To that question, the British answer has hitherto been to concentrate power in one supreme central Parliament. But an alternative answer is possible, that society may be held together through what Gladstone once called a "recognition of the distinctive qualities of the separate parts of great countries". If that answer is correct, devolution will strengthen national unity, not weaken it.

The author is Professor of Government, Oxford University.

Don't dismiss the paranormal — the argument for ghosts is backed by a solid body of observation

Haunted by evidence of a spirit world

William Rees-Mogg

Peterhouse, Cambridge, has a new, or rather quite an old, ghost. There are two paradoxes about ghosts. The first is that they fascinate the human imagination, but seem to repel the modern intellect. The second is that there is profuse evidence that they exist, but a widespread refusal to consider that evidence. The power they have over the imagination is shown in *Hamlet* and *Don Giovanni*; the plots of the world's greatest play and the world's greatest opera depend on the appearance of a ghost. Yet most of us refuse to believe that they exist.

I do believe in them, simply on the weight of evidence. I have never seen a ghost, but I know many honest and sane people who have. A cousin discussed rare beetles with a British Museum entomologist in the New Forest; the entomologist had died ten years before. The same cousin frequently saw C. Aubrey Smith's terrier in the family drawing room; the dog was long dead. Two ladies saw the Sten Easton ghost in what used to be our bedroom; in the attic room above, the upstairs maid had been murdered in the early 1790s.

I even knew someone when she was alive who was seen after her death as a spirit. A cousin, by marriage owned a house near Stratford-upon-Avon. She spent her last years as an invalid, sitting in a garden summerhouse which had been built by her first husband in 1910. I used to sit and talk to her there. I went back to see the house in the 1980s, and was told by the owner, a widow, that the garden house was haunted by an old lady who left a great feeling of happiness and peace. The widow had no idea who that might be.

My grandmother's first cousin, who was knighted for being a successful Victorian Commissioner at the Metropolitan Police, was invited to stay at Longest. As he

came into the drawing room the company were called in to dinner; he asked Lady Bath whether they should not wait for the lady dressed in grey he had passed on the stairs. The grey lady is the most celebrated of the Longest ghosts.

So the stories go on. Some no doubt are embellished, or become so. Any individual story may have been made up, or may have a normal explanation. Yet there are so many of them, and in so many of the cases the witnesses are so good, that it is sheer superstition to refuse to look at the evidence. Something happens, even if we do not know what.

I am glad that the latest ghost has been sighted at Cambridge, and reported not in a tabloid but by *The Times Higher Education Supplement*. The Peterhouse ghost has been seen on separate occasions and by three witnesses; he wears a broad collar and carries a large hat. That suggests the costume of the 1650s; if he were the burster who hanged himself in 1789, he ought to be wearing a cravat and a wig. The witnesses include Andrew Murison, the senior bursar, who was hitherto a non-believer in such apparitions.

There have been two occasions in English history in which ghosts have become intellectually respectable, and Cambridge is associated with both of them. One was the late 19th-century foundation of the Society for Psychical Research; the first president was Henry Sidgwick, of Trinity

College. Much more important was the development of what was called the "new philosophy" in the second half of the 17th century. The new philosophy threw off the rigid Aristotelian orthodoxy which had lingered on from the Middle Ages; it combined elements of neo-Platonism with scientific inquiry. Its eventual institutional expression was the Royal Society. In Cambridge the new philosophy started the scientific tradition which continues to this day, but it also found expression in the

Three hundred years ago the grey lady of Longest was an entirely natural phenomenon; she walked upstairs. After her death she had become a problematic case of walking upstairs out of her apparent time sequence. We do not know how she does that.

Joseph Glanvill, later Rector of Bath, was an Oxford graduate but a close associate of the Cambridge Platonists. He reported cases of sightings of ghosts and other paranormal phenomena. He first published, in 1661, the intriguing story of the Scholar Gipsy, which so fascinated Matthew Arnold. The Scholar Gipsy, who may be a fiction or a real figure, was a brilliant Oxford scholar who ran out of money, joined a band of gipsies, and learnt their secret arts. A group of his friends met him; he signalled to them not to show their recognition, and promised to demonstrate his new powers. He would tell them the details of a conversation they were to hold when he was not present. They talked in a private room, in his absence; he told them all they had said; they were amazed.

The Scholar Gipsy explained how this was done. He told them "that what he did was by the power of imagination, his fancy binding theirs; and that he himself had dictated to them the discourse they held together while he was from them. There were wondrous ways of heightening the imagination to that pitch as to bind another's".

Whether the telepathic hypothesis which the Scholar Gipsy practised is actually possible may be questioned. It is an action at a distance problem. Isaac Newton thought that scientists should be open about such a problem, which was a difficulty for him when dealing with gravity. Leibniz had criticised Newton for maintaining that gravity was impressed on matter by the action of God, "making gravity a perpetual miracle". In the second edition of his *Optics*, published in 1718, Newton replied: "By what efficient cause these tractions (viz gravity, magnetism and electricity) are performed, I do not here enquire. For we ought first to learn from the phenomena of nature what bodies mutually attract each other, and what are the laws and properties of that attraction, before we enquire by what efficient cause it is performed." That is also the right way to approach the apparently paranormal.

Ghosts are important, if they exist, because they raise such interesting questions. They obviously raise the question of human survival. Some ghosts seem merely to be re-enacting past events; they no more prove survival than would a film portrayal by a dead actor. Others are interactive; they converse, give warnings or other messages, and often report their own deaths. Interactive ghosts do support the idea of survival. Ghosts also raise the question of time: is time a unique dimension, which can only be travelled in one direction, or is it like the dimensions of space which can be tracked to and from?

The Peterhouse ghost has arrived at the right place and perhaps at the right time. I hope Cambridge will not give him the cold shoulder, but will welcome him as a Scholar Gipsy in time, in Isaac Newton's own spirit of scientific openness.

Big Brother, big blather

Peter Riddell draws up a reading list for Labour ministers

New Labour has little sense of history. For many of Tony Blair's circle, history began in July 1994, when he was elected Labour leader; for some, year zero started on May 2 with the triumphal walk up Downing Street. The Blairites are determined to present the Government as completely new that any hint of links with the past and "old" Labour is obliterated. This ideological blinker is reinforced by an ignorance about political events.

Mr Blair himself characteristically focuses on the big picture. He shares the regret of Roy Jenkins at the split in the Centre-Left between Liberals and Labour in the first quarter of this century which ensured that the Tories held power for so long. He wants to reunite these strands, pointing to the contribution of Liberals such as Keynes and Beveridge. Mr Blair does read political biographies, though he has few Labour roots and little awareness of past struggles. For instance, there are parallels between the tensions among his main lieutenants (Brown, Prescott, Cook and Mandelson) and similar ones among the big beasts of the Attlee and Wilson Governments.

Some other Labour leaders, such as Donald Dewar and Jack Straw, do have an historical perspective. But, for many, there is little beyond a romantic vision of the achievements of the 1945 administration, with everything in between forgotten.

In some ways this is hardly surprising, since four fifths of current ministers were not involved in national politics when Labour was last in office. But it is more than inexperience. There is also a conscious preference for modernity over



continuity, for relying on focus groups rather than constitutional precedents. This is reflected in some of the more vacuous marketing gimmicks, like mission statements, the attempt to "rebrand" Britain and talk of a "young country". There are also more serious dangers. Anyone with a feeling for how government operates would have spotted the potential conflicts of interest in the Ecclestone affair much earlier.

Veterans of the Wilson and Callaghan administrations have generally not aired their private doubts about these trends. An elder statesman of that era recently asked one of the shrewder members of the Blair Cabinet: "Are they learning yet?" The response was cautiously positive. Time and events will fill in the gaps, but the Blairites do need to learn some history.

A useful starting point is Peter Clarke's *Hopes and Glory* — a balanced history of Britain this century. This might be supplemented by Roy Hattersley's recent *Fifty Years On: A Personal History of Britain Since the War*. For all the author's egalitarian viewpoint, this is, in fact, a remarkably unprejudiced account, which concludes that because Mr Blair "neither knew nor cared about what Labour had once stood for, he was able to lead the most remarkable revolution in modern political history... The prophets of new Labour... took over an established political party and recreated it in their own image. The ideas which had inspired a century of democratic socialism were ruthlessly discredited."

Gordon Brown should study Edmund Dell's *The Chancellors*, which astutely punctures the false optimism of most occupants of 11 Downing Street. And anyone who thinks that David Blunkett's leaked memo about cuts in benefits is unique should study the similar Tory debate about welfare reform revealed in Nigel Lawson's masterly *The View from Number 11*, or Norman Fowler's unfairly decided *Ministers Decide*.

The Blair team also seem to know little about European history. In this they are hardly unique among British politicians. But despite their claims to be pro-European, Labour ministers have been insensitive to continental traditions and attitudes. Talk of leading Europe is resented when Britain appears to be challenging some of the principal values

and beliefs of the European Union. A lot is going to be written over the coming 12 months about the 150th anniversary of the upheavals of 1848, which are still largely ignored in Britain. One result was Bismarck's belief in the need for social reform to underpin his diplomatic and military ambitions. He is the real architect of a "social Europe". After the Government's procrastination over monetary union, Mr Blair and Mr Brown should read Roy Denman's *Mixed Chances*, a vivid account of how Britain has continually blundered in its relations with the rest of Europe.

A revealing and brutally realistic account of British foreign policy at the end of the Cold War has been written by Sir Percy Cradock, Downing Street foreign policy adviser and chairman of the Joint Intelligence Committee in this period, in his *In Pursuit of British Interests*. These cool, detached insights contrast with the passion and partisanship which Sir Percy has displayed over China and Hong Kong. Like Clarke and Denman, Sir Percy highlights "the failure to lay the ghosts of the past, set a constructive course on Europe and engage public opinion in its support."

Politicians who talk about the "people's priorities" and "beacons" need a linguistic cold shower. By far the best corrective to such guff remains George Orwell, particularly his classic 1946 essay *Politics and the English Language*. This includes the marvelous phrase that political language is "designed to give an appearance of solidity to pure wind". I would love to have read Orwell on some of the inmates of "new Labourpeak".

So instead of inviting meretricious showbusiness "personalities" to Downing Street, Mr Blair — and many of the Blairites — would be better occupied popping along to that most welcome new arrival this year, *Politico's*, the political bookshop and coffee house on Artillery Row. Reading, and reflection, would not only be a corrective to some of the recent silly populism, but might even produce better government.

In the stars

THE TROUBLED stars of Diana, Princess of Wales, are at last to be brought before the public gaze: her astrologer, Debbie Frank, is writing a book about her. Although a publisher has yet to be found, it is expected to appear early next year.

Ms Frank — a serious type who trained at the Faculty of Astrology in London — had consulted the Princess for eight years and last saw her at Kensington Palace



"Let us pay"

shortly before she died. "It will be my story about Diana," she says. They appear to have been rather chummy. "Our relationship involved some very deep soul-searching. I was there to listen to Diana and I realised that I was placed in a position of great trust," says Debbie, 38, who was not paid for her services. "It was a deep and intimate bond. Diana would call me from all over the world and always introduce herself in the same way: 'Hello, I'm just checking in with you Debbie.' She trusted me with many things and she was always loyal." (So loyal that she was known to breeze across the Thames for kitchen suppers at Ms Frank's compact flat in Clapham.)

"My work with her was highly confidential but now that she's died, the ethics that would have governed me when she was alive have changed slightly," Quire.

Flick flop

A VERY private party was held last week to celebrate an expensive new flick about the 1970s glam-rock scene, *Vulver Goldmine*. The cast



includes Ewan McGregor, Eddie Izzard and Toni Collette. Some 400 guests were bid to The Leopard Lounge — a low-rent place in Fulham Broadway — for an evening of transvestites, dancing girls sprayed with gold paint, *L-T-H* canapés, the works. Problem. None of the cast turned up. "Ewan's filming and couldn't make it," says a deflated suit at the production office. "I can't think what happened to the rest."

Hacked off

LOBBY hacks seldom get much exercise, but in South London last Friday they took on a Downing Street football side captained by Tim Allen, Tony Blair's silky spinner. Among those wearing vivid red shirts were John Holmes, the PM's private secretary, and Liz Lloyd, an

adviser in the policy unit. Kick-off found Allen rather disgruntled. "The lobby have brought in some very suspect players," he complained. "A French professional footballer, who works in the gallery carmen, and Ed Balls, Gordon Brown's adviser. Just because he once worked for the FT." His team was not appalled by the result — a 3-3 draw — and has demanded a rematch.

● MY best wishes to Lizzie Pimman, the niece of the Earl of Gainsborough and Tony Blair's charmingly optimistic Tory opponent in



Hart Lizzie Pimman

Sedgefield: she is in hospital, having broken her back in a riding accident. A bouquet of *Diary* flowers is on its way.

Level best

A CHRISTMAS bonus for the 47 Labour MPs who voted on behalf of lone parents — Tony Benn, Lew Smith, the compassionate types — comes courtesy of the rock group, The Levellers. They have sent the MPs each a CD about the 17th-century rebel, John Lilburne. "It's rather well put together," says Benn, "but I had a copy already."

Down at heal

DECADES of debauchery have had few repercussions on the friends of the author Molly Parkin — Anita Pallenberg, Twiggy, Mick Jagger, that set. Thinking they might benefit from spiritual guidance, Parkin has set herself up as a faith-healer. "I wanted to heal my friends' pain," she says. Business is slack. "None of them needs me," says Parkin. "They're just too strong."

● YESTERDAY's confrontation between Manchester United and Newcastle did little to enhance re-



THIS charming Christmas card depicts David Hart, a flamboyant chap who dedicated his life to serving the former Defence Secretary, Michael Portillo, and the former Foreign Secretary, Malcolm Rifkind, as a special adviser. That faraway look in his eyes, aligned to an empty glass, reeks of a man indulging in what might have been.

lations in the Blair household. Tony supports Newcastle; his son, Nicholas, 11, rattles for Manchester. Both attended the match. "Mr Blair gets quite carried away," she says, resting strip. "He hates to see his side go down."

Lack of Will

CRACKS are appearing in the prime ministerial ranks. Will

Hutton, Editor of *The Observer*, has fallen out with his former chum Geoffrey Robinson over the paper's coverage of the Paymaster General's offshore investments. For the first time since 1978, Hutton was not invited to the Chancellor's Christmas party, held last week at No 11. "Robinson," Hutton opines, "must find the criticism particularly hurtful coming from us."

JASPER GERARD



BLAIR'S WHITELAW

A loyal deputy is needed to support Labour's welfare reform

No issue is as important for this Government as welfare reform, and no issue has such a potential to divide its leading players. The leak of a letter from David Blunkett, the Education Secretary, to Gordon Brown, the Chancellor of the Exchequer, has cast revealing light on the scale of the problem. The anxieties that Mr Blunkett expresses at proposals under consideration by the Department of Social Security are not the antics of a natural rebel but the thoughtful concerns of a born-again Blairite. Mr Blunkett is entirely in sympathy with the broad thrust of the Welfare-to-Work strategy. As his bravery in defending university tuition fees shows, he cannot be dismissed as a shirker of hard choices. He is, however, deeply concerned about potential reforms to benefits for the disabled.

The most arresting point in his letter is the admission that spending on disability benefits is rising by 6 per cent in real terms a year. There is an urgent need to tackle that increase at its source. The Prime Minister's willingness to press ahead with such a reconstruction was underlined in a speech on Saturday. Mr Blunkett's letter is a reminder that Mr Blair must display political skill as well as policy clarity if his reforms are not to be mis-sold.

The establishment of a new ministerial working group on welfare reform acknowledges the need to co-ordinate the Government's efforts. The crunch will come quickly. In the first few months of next year, reviews of Welfare-to-Work policy and the tax and benefits structure will be completed and Frank Field, the Minister for Welfare Reform, will publish a Green Paper. Tensions between different approaches within government were already widely reported before the leak of Mr Blunkett's letter. Mr Field and his boss, Harriet Harman, have different priorities, and some of Mr Field's ethical thinking has been at odds with the direction in which the

Chancellor wishes to go. The need for stronger central direction and clearer presentation of the Government's philosophical position has become pressing in the wake of the changes to lone parent benefits. Persuasion need not wait upon the conclusion of the government reviews. The Prime Minister should begin now to prepare his lieutenants for the coming campaign. In particular, he should ensure that John Prescott is prepared to play the evangelist. By binding him at an early stage during the rewriting of Clause Four, Mr Blair transformed initial suspicion from the grass roots into positive enthusiasm for change.

Mr Blair's position has been compared, not least by Matthew Parris last week, to Margaret Thatcher's at the beginning of her administration. He has the support of the party's rising talents and a clear conception of the scale of the task which confronts him. But many in his parliamentary party are set upon confrontation. Just as Mrs Thatcher relied on true believers in bridgehead departments to advance her revolution, so Mr Blair must not falter in his support for the most imaginative modernisers. But even more important for her than the will of the committed was the support of her deputy, the pragmatic traditionalist Willie Whitelaw. His loyalty prevented discontent from coalescing into obstruction. Likewise, the knowledge that Mr Prescott stood shoulder-to-shoulder with his leader on welfare reform would be the most effective deterrent to dissidents today.

Mr Prescott's position is complicated by the poor personal chemistry he enjoys with Ms Harman, an antipathy which was intensified by her choice of a selective school for her son. It could be that Ms Harman will have to change jobs next year to make way for another figure to sell the reforms that she has set in train. To keep his deputy outside, Mr Blair may judge that his New Deal is worth moving an old friend.

THE LAST BOER

Botha must testify to the truth commission

The stand-off between Archbishop Desmond Tutu and former President P.W. Botha continued over this weekend. On Friday, for the third time, Mr Botha refused to appear in person before the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. He restated that position yesterday. Technically, he should have been arrested for contempt some time ago. The South African authorities have, though, little enthusiasm for sending an 81-year-old man into incarceration. Nelson Mandela, who has long experience of it, is desperate not to send his predecessor bar one to prison. Frank Kahn, Attorney-General of the Western Cape Province, has deferred a final decision until January 2.

This delay has been designed to offer Mr Botha one last chance. After that, the Government may have little choice but to place him in custody. The truth commission is in the last part of its proceedings: it cannot afford to be humiliated now. A former President under lock and key would be a powerful symbol for the white ultra-Right. Its re-emergence, and the exploitation of Mr Botha as a political prisoner, could sour relations between South Africa's races.

Mr Botha should think hard before provoking that confrontation. He has agreed to submit written answers to Archbishop Tutu, but says he will not testify before a "circus". He has argued that his fight against "Marxist revolutionaries" requires no apology. However, the truth commission has not, with the notable exception of its treatment of Winnie Mandela, been a circus. Nor has it been some sort of show trial. On the whole it has been a cathartic exercise: it has accounted for and explained violent acts on all sides during the apartheid era.

Many of those who served in Cabinet with Mr Botha have been content to talk to the commission. They have attempted to articulate a legitimate defence. The intensifying struggle for control of South Africa in the 1980s spawned terror that many would rather not have sanctified. In large part, the fear that majority rule would mean a Marxist regime did lie behind the security strategy of the white establishment. Only later was the realistic assessment made that it was possible to do business with the ANC and bury apartheid peacefully.

Mr Botha's stance is exceptionally selfish. It makes it difficult for the commission to complete its investigation and draw a line under the past. That in turn means that pardoning or releasing those who did commit atrocities in the name of apartheid becomes harder. Until all those involved in the conflict of the 1980s have said their piece, it will be impossible for Mr Mandela to be as free as he wishes with his power of mercy. For the sake of his own troops, Mr Botha should take the stand.

Mr Botha should also remember his own reputation. As President he imposed the state of emergency, but he also took the first step towards a political settlement. His initiatives to ease apartheid, although condemned at the time as tokenism by his opponents, allowed his successor, F.W. de Klerk, to move more quickly towards the ANC. One of Mr Botha's last acts in office was to meet the imprisoned Mr Mandela. The President who, rightly, said that South Africa had "crossed the Rubicon" should not allow himself to become a Boer martyr. Mr Botha owes the future as well as the past his public words.

A SOFT TOUCH

Hard-headed landlords are cheating clear-headed drinkers

The happy Scrooge hoping for a cheap round of pub drinks as responsible revellers stick to lemonade must nowadays wish that everyone drank beer. For, as those ordering soft drinks find to their fury, mineral water might as well be vodka, to judge by the price. At almost £3 a pint, water is as almost as expensive as a jug of wine. Orange juice, that other standby to keep the head clear in festive times, is served in bottles so small that the contents disappear with one thirsty swig. And for the price of two bottles one might as well order a lot of whisky. No wonder pubs stand accused of mark-ups as high as last night's darts score. No wonder the Government believes that landlords are undermining the Christmas drinks campaign.

Most regulars have long known that mine host has little interest in serving soft, sweet fizz. The careful tomato juice drinker is unlikely to return for a further four pints, or to down peanuts by the fistful. Those nursing their cola in the corner seem to laugh less, talk less and do less to create the merry atmosphere that lures clients into his hostelry. What regulars may not realise is that publicans have their own way to get even with these enemies of his best bitter. A gadget beneath the bar that oozes a dollop of coloured syrup into carbonated water can supply half a dozen soft drinks, purportedly this or that favourite cola, for the cost of a bag of crisps. Yet most drinkers will find precious little change from a fiver after only three shots from this dispenser of tasteless fizz.

Nigel Griffiths, the Consumer Affairs Minister, believes that the rip-off is unfair, the mark-up outrageous and the prices a disincentive to any driver with a sense of seasonal responsibility. Injured publicans insist that mineral water revellers occupy as much room, use as many glasses and take up as much time as proper drinkers. They argue that, far from being extortionate, the profit margin on soft drinks is slender and prices are among the lowest in Europe. Those wanting cheap orange juice should stick to the supermarket, they say.

Their claims have as much credibility as the punch of a non-alcoholic beer. Any drinker knows that the average pub offers sickly juice and anaemic cola at a time when the market can supply a tempting variety of soft drinks. The fact is that too many codgers behind the bar cannot be bothered to change, and too many beer companies have an interest in selling only their own products. Customers have seen all this before. For years, pub grub was uneatable until entrepreneurs saw the profit to be made in good food. Fine wine is still virtually unobtainable, but a few landlords are beginning to stock their cellars. And some pub chains, after words with the Government, are to bring down soft drink prices. Britain should look to Canada, where some provinces offer soft drinks at half-price to designated drivers who can show their car keys. Oranges and lemons cost little. They also save lives.

Reformation lies in jail education

From the Director General of HM Prison Service

Sir, The nature of educational services offered by the Prison Service is not "shambolic" as Joel Parkes suggests ("Can we eliminate evil", article, Law, December 16). On the contrary, there is a clear policy: it is to ensure that education plays a full and effective role in stimulating constructive behaviour in prison, and in equipping the full range of prisoners for a life after prison free from crime.

The Open University, though the most popular, is not the only option for those few prisoners who wish to study for a degree course — some study for external degrees from other universities, and in a couple of cases university staff come to prisons to teach inmates to degree level.

The small number of prisoners following degree-level courses is no measure of the efficacy of prison education. Degree-level education is not what most prisoners need. Sixty per cent of the prison population (which today stands at 63,350) have reading and writing skills at or below basic skills agency level 1 — skills sufficient to qualify them for only one in 25 job vacancies. Basic education is the top priority in our central task of getting prisoners into work and away from crime when they leave prison.

The service's core curriculum — basic education skills, basic IT skills and life and social skills — reflects that. As a core curriculum, it is designed to be offered in all prisons, precisely so that prisoners who move from one prison to another can continue with it.

Beyond the core curriculum, there is a wide range of accredited courses now available. Almost 35,000 prisoners have been screened for basic skills needs. Last year the service offered NVQs in 48 subjects and 17,309 individual NVQ units were awarded to prisoners. This year we expect to spend £36.25 million on prison education.

There will always be room for improvement. There is some mismatch between what different prisons can provide, which does sometimes disadvantage prisoners who move part-way through more advanced courses; Joel Parkes's article was quite unwarranted and insulting to our many dedicated education staff.

Yours sincerely,
RICHARD TILL,
Director General,
HM Prison Service, Cleland House,
Page Street SWP 4LN,
December 18.

From the Chairman of the Association of Prison Education Contractors

Sir, Joel Parkes's comments on prison education are timely.

When prison education was contracted out in 1993, prison governors were given an overall budget for everything except capital funding. Over the last few years total budgets have been progressively cut and they have had to find savings. Because there is little restriction on how they spend their budgets, some have chosen to protect education spending, making most of their cuts in uniformed staff, while others have cut into the contracted services like education and probation.

In October, governors said on BBC Newsnight that further cuts in their overall budget this year could not be met by reductions in uniformed staff, but would mean the total removal of education, probation, libraries and workshops. At least one prison has given notice to its contractor that it will have no education from April.

This association wrote to the Prison Minister, Joyce Quin, in October asking for an urgent meeting to discuss the Government's policy on prison education. This is particularly important as we are now engaged in the tendering process to get contracts to deliver prison education from 1999. To date, and after several phone calls to the Home Office, we have received no answer to our letter.

Prison education has become much better organised and the overall quality is rising. However, the quantity available to inmates has declined, with spending dropping between 1995-96 and 1996-97 by £2.5 million. In the long term, a proper analysis should be carried out, estimating the correct level of education on budget for each prison. That budget should then be ring-fenced so it is outside the governor's control.

In the short term, the Government needs to make its commitment to a rehabilitative prison system in which education has a vital role. Governors' key performance indicators need to include high education standards.

Finally, the public needs to be weaned off the idea that prison works as an answer to crime. Locking people up is not enough: what you do with prisoners does make a difference, and it is worth spending money on.

Yours faithfully,
JEFFREY R. BUTCHER,
Chairman, Association of Prison Education Contractors,
c/o Essex County Council Learning Services Directorate,
PO Box 47, A Block, County Hall,
Chelmsford CM1,
December 17.

With the postal delays that often occur at this time of year, it is useful, where possible, for letters to be faxed to 0171-782 5046 or sent by e-mail to: letters@the-times.co.uk Please give telephone numbers.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

1 Pennington Street, London E1 9KN Telephone 0171-782 5000

Tory party reformers seek a voice for the rank-and-file

From Mr John E. Strafford

Sir, *The Times* is right (leading article, "Tories for democracy", December 17) to take credit for the emerging enthusiasm for democracy in the Conservative Party. I cannot agree with the views of Sir Julian Critchley (letter, December 19), which are more akin to the politics of the 19th rather than the 21st century.

Electing the leader on the basis of one member, one vote, without an electoral college, is the kind of grand gesture that will help to transform public perception of the party and make it electable again. It will encourage new members to join.

In addition, people will be able to contrast the democratic way in which Conservatives elect their leader with the false democracy of the Labour Party. Labour operates an electoral college in which individual members have only one third of the votes and MPs and members of affiliated organisations (mainly trade unionists) one third each. Such a system enshrines the vested interests of the unions in electing the leader.

By adopting *The Times's* proposals the Conservatives will be able to highlight Labour's outrageous arrangement.

Yours faithfully,
JOHN E. STRAFFORD,
Chairman, Copov,
(Campaign for Conservative Party Democracy),
Perama, Fulmer Road,
Gerrards Cross SL9 7EG,
December 19.

From Mr Eric Chalker

Sir, *The Times* is a strong advocate of democracy in the Conservative Party, especially for its leader to be elected by one member, one vote. If this is to be the only means of achieving democracy, however, it will not be sufficient for Omov to apply only to the final round. Democracy is effective only if those who exercise the vote can do so to

bring about change. If change can be achieved only through the leader, party members must be given the right to initiate such a change.

Even so, if one candidate receives the support of, say, 48 per cent and another 28 per cent, there will be no third candidate for party members to consider. They will inevitably then be asked to allow the one with 48 per cent to succeed, perhaps without a final vote at all.

A more effective way of ensuring democracy was advocated by *The Times* on October 8, in a leading article calling for the party's governing board to be "populated by people directly elected by the entire party". The idea that at least the party's officers on the board should be elected by the membership is now an active issue of debate and one that will not go away, whatever is decided about the leader.

Yours sincerely,
ERIC CHALKER,
21 Ingleside Close,
Beckenham BR3 1QU,
December 19.

From Mr Mark Orton

Sir, Whether they are right or wrong, at least one knows what the so-called "right-wing Tories" who occupy the floor at the Conservative conference stand for (Sir Julian Critchley's letter). This can hardly be said of the last Government.

In my view, the moderate platform has had its day. What is needed is positive leadership and not impossible attempts to please all the people all the time.

Yours truly,
MARK ORTON,
2 Selwyn Close,
Airewas, Staffordshire DE13 7DR,
mto88@aol.com
December 19.

From Mr Keith Walters

Sir, As a lifelong Conservative supporter, and a local politician, I was

appalled (but not greatly surprised) by the arrogance of Sir Julian Critchley's letter today. His last sentence, "Throw them a bone by all means, but make it a small one" brilliantly encapsulates the attitude to the rank-and-file that has brought the Conservative Party to its present position in British national politics.

These "right-wing Tories" of the most unattractive kind were always considered suitable to go out canvassing for people like Sir Julian: but they are, apparently, not responsible enough to have a significant voice in the selection of a leader.

Yours sincerely,
KEITH WALTERS,
17 The Gardens, Sawtry,
Huntingdon PE17 5SU,
keith.walters@ccouncil.camcity.gov.uk
December 19.

From Colonel Charles H. Wilson (ret)

Sir, Now the reasons for the decline and fall of the Conservative Party are clear. In the columns opposite on December 19 Matthew Parris instances the excitement caused in the early 1980s when Julian Critchley wrote an anonymous article criticising Mrs Thatcher's leadership, and the early clouds of doubt it raised.

Meanwhile, on this page, also on December 19, Sir Julian Critchley writes about "the battle" waged between a relatively moderate platform [at Conservative conferences] and an extremist rank-and-file; the former possessing good sense and the latter noisy and foolish.

And so it was on the Ides of March — a stab in the back and a public scorned.

Yours faithfully,
CHARLES WILSON,
Foxhills,
70 Long Road, Framingham Earl,
Norwich, NR14 7RZ,
December 21.

Two-flag Gibraltar

From General Sir William Jackson

Sir, Mr Mike Gilbert (letter, December 16) should understand that Gibraltar is not ours to give away nor Spain's to acquire: it belongs to the Gibraltarians, whose home it has been for almost 300 years. He implies that the Gibraltarians are Spanish, which they certainly are not.

The capture of the Rock in 1704 is only relevant today as the birthday of the Gibraltarian people. We no longer hold the Rock for strategic reasons. And any parallels with the leased territories of Hong Kong are equally fallacious: Gibraltar was ceded in perpetuity to Britain.

The original Spanish civilian inhabitants, who abandoned the Rock in 1704, were replaced largely by the small Genoese colony, who stayed on, and brought their relations from Genoa to serve the English fleet and garrison. For the first hundred years of the British period, the land frontier was hermetically sealed by Spain, and the Rock's repopulation depended upon attracting traders and workers from other British bases in the Mediterranean and from Britain. It was not until Napoleon invaded Spain in 1807, and the Rock became a supply base for the local resistance, that Spanish girls could add their genes to the Gibraltarian ethnic mix.

We have tried for over 40 years to persuade Spain to abandon coercion

of this proud and loyal British people, and to adopt a policy of good-neighbourliness towards them. This could benefit people on both sides of the frontier and might conceivably lead, in the longer term, to Gibraltar opting for Spain through osmosis, if for no other reason.

Yours faithfully,
BILL JACKSON,
(Governor and Commander-in-Chief,
Gibraltar, 1978-82),
West Stowell Place,
Oare, Marlborough SN8 4JU,
December 16.

From Mr M. L. Abel

Sir, Mr Gilbert bases his argument for "an accommodation" with Spain over Gibraltar on an unsupported statement that "Britain twisted a foreign power's arm" to gain the Rock.

What is certainly the case is that Gibraltar has been British (1704 to date) longer than it was Spanish (1492 to 1704). It was Moorish for longer than the combined periods of Spanish then British sovereignty.

There is no valid reason why the wishes of the overwhelming majority of the Gibraltarians should not be taken into account. It is right that the status quo should be preserved — unless one subscribes to the geography theory of history.

Yours faithfully,
M. L. ABEL,
28 Waterpark Road, Salford M7 4ET.

Papal U-turn

From Mr Adam K. Cohen

Sir, It struck me as being slightly ironic that three and a half centuries after locking up Galileo for doing so, the Vatican is building its own telescope. Presumably the telescope will be named Urban VIII.

Yours faithfully,
ADAM K. COHEN,
32 Onslow Square, SW7 3NS,
adam.cohen@ps.net
December 15

Legal 'fat cats'

From Mr J. D. H. Heath

Sir, I regard the Lord Chancellor, who complains about fat-cat lawyers exploiting the legal aid system (report, December 11), as largely responsible for the public belief that anybody involved in legal aid work exploits the system.

I act as a duty solicitor, on call to the police station at any time during a specified 24-hour period, and the remuneration made available by a reluctant Lord Chancellor to my firm, as a legal aid franchisee, is £61.75 per hour for work undertaken in unsocial hours.

The other morning, idly waiting for my client to be charged, at 2am, I worked out exactly what it was worth to me to be in the police station at that ungodly hour. Once I had extracted from that sum the fixed proportion of office overheads, that share of it to which my partners were entitled, and the income tax payable on my own share, I was left with 73p. This cat is feeling decidedly lean.

Yours faithfully,
JOHN HEATH,
Walker, Smith & Way (solicitors),
26 Nicholas Street,
Chester CH1 2PQ,
December 11.

Home births

From Mrs Patricia Carey

Sir, Mr Phil Ridgway wryly points out to his children that he was born in what is today the saloon bar of the Fox and Goose (letter, December 16).

I too was born at home, above my father's sub-post office in Putney. This is often marked by a star on road maps — a fact that never ceases to amaze my son aged eight, especially at this time of year.

Yours faithfully,
PATRICIA E. CAREY,
65 Harefield Avenue,
Cheadam, SM2 7ND,
December 17.

From Mrs Anne Scott

Sir, I often remind my son, at present out celebrating the festive season, that his birthplace, on Hyde Terrace, Leeds, is now a Detoxification Unit.

Yours faithfully,
ANNE SCOTT,
7 Homelands Road,
Sale, Cheshire, M33 4BJ,
December 17.

Jumping the gun

From Mr Ian Munro

Sir, House style changes infrequently at *The Times* whilst you promptly adopted correspondents' e-mail addresses it is only today that I notice the inclusion of postcodes, and omission of county names.

Should we now write "Dear Sir"? Or would that be premature?

Yours faithfully,
IAN MUNRO,
68 Furzedown Road, Sutton SM25QF,
December 13.

OBITUARIES

LORD KINGS NORTON

Lord Kings Norton (Harold Roxbee Cox), aeronautical engineer, Chancellor of Cranfield University (formerly Cranfield Institute of Technology), died yesterday in hospital in Gloucestershire aged 95. He was born in Birmingham on June 6, 1902.

Scientist, administrator and industrialist, Harold Roxbee Cox was for more than half a century a leading figure in British aviation. A past President of the Royal Aeronautical Society, and a former Chief Scientist to the Ministry of Fuel and Power, he brought sound judgement, fairness and clarity of thought to a wide range of public service and a catholic span of activities, in a long life that ran from the era of the leisurely rigid-airship to that of the supersonic jet. The son of William and Amelia Roxbee Cox, "Roxbee" — as he was known to legions of friends throughout his life — went, first, to Kings Norton Grammar School, Birmingham, and, from there, in 1918, as a 16-year-old engineering apprentice, to the Austin Motor Company at its Northfield Works, Longbridge. There, to his delight, in addition to motorcar work, he took part in the design and building of a single-seat, light biplane — the "Austin Whippet" — of which, in the depressed aftermath of war, only five were built. The work had given him a taste for aviation. That was reinforced in July of 1919 when the British rigid airship R34 made the first "double-crossing" of the North Atlantic. Its widely acclaimed success launched Roxbee Cox upon his lifelong interest in lighter-than-air, and prompted him to start what was to become a magnificent and probably unrivalled collection of balloon and airship prints and paintings. While still at Longbridge he gained an external London University BSc with first class honours and went on, in 1922, to do research for his PhD at London's Imperial College of Science and Technology, specifically on aircraft wing sections. His abiding airship interest then led him, in 1924, to apply for a post in the newly-formed Royal Airship Works at Cardington, Bedford, to work on the design of R101 in a dedicated team under Colonel Vincent Richmond. At Cardington, Cox's aerodynamic

talents were quickly recognised and — with his contemporaries, the future Lord Baker of Windrush and the future Sir Alfred Pugsley — he laid out the "near perfect, streamline form" of R101, as a clear advance on earlier Zeppelin practice. For this, in 1928, the Royal Aeronautical Society awarded him the R38 Memorial Prize for a paper on "external forces on an airship structure". Close and continued liaison between the Royal Airship Works and the Royal Aircraft Establishment at Farnborough produced, in 1929, an offer to Roxbee Cox to join the Aerodynamics Department of the RAE — a centre of aeronautical activity which was to occupy him for the next decade (apart from a brief return to Cardington in 1931 as chief technical officer, ended by the government decision to abandon further airship work). During the next four years, from 1932 to 1935, Roxbee Cox led investigations at the RAE into problems of wing flutter and the stability of monoplane structures, areas in which increasing aircraft speeds were causing catastrophic difficulties. At the same time, at Imperial College, he began to build a sound reputation as a lecturer on aircraft structures. Promoted in 1935 to be principal scientific officer in the aerodynamics department of the RAE, he was switched, when war clouds began to loom, to become head of the RAE's Air Defence Department. There he began a happy collaboration with some of the chief designers of the British aircraft industry, working on the new generation of British monoplane fighters (Hurricane, Spitfire and Defiant) and the new monoplane bombers (Battle, Blenheim, Wellington and Whitley). At the same time, he was able to keep in touch with lighter-than-air developments through the improvisation of the kite-balloon barrage. By 1938, his personal and technical qualities were recognised in quite a different field when, on March 1, 1938, he was appointed the first chief technical officer of the newly formed Air Registration Board — a statutory, autonomous body set up to become responsible for the standards of design, construction and maintenance of British civil aircraft, and to award (or withhold) certificates of airworthiness. Doubts about the appointment of a



"boffin" to such a key position in relation to British civil aircraft were dispelled when the aircraft industry welcomed Roxbee Cox as one who combined academic prowess with practical knowledge, sound common sense and a genial ability to communicate; qualities which remained with him — and served him well — for the rest of his life. Under Roxbee Cox — and its chairman, Sir Maurice Denny — the new ARB quickly gained a reputation for efficiency

and ability and, in its first year of operation, recommended the granting of certificates of airworthiness to 987 individual aircraft. When war came in September 1939 and the ARB went into semi-purgatory for the duration, there came — inevitably — another major change in Roxbee Cox's career. Back at the RAE, he was appointed superintendent of scientific research, and then — with the formation of the Ministry of Aircraft Production, in 1940 — its director of scientific research on new projects, including troop-carrying gliders. From that, in 1941, as director of special projects, in collaboration with Sir Frank Whittle, he was charged with the administration and co-ordination of the top-secret development of the jet engine. On April 28, 1944, Sir Stafford Cripps, as Minister of Aircraft Production, appointed Roxbee Cox chairman and managing director of Power Jets (Research and Development) Ltd, a state-owned company, to take over the former small, privately owned body of the same name. That plunged Roxbee Cox into the delicate task of preserving a balance between Power Jets and Whittle on the one hand (involved with prototype engines), while leaving — to Whittle's chagrin — production to the aero-engine industry, represented chiefly by Rolls-Royce, Armstrong Siddeley, de Havilland, Bristol and Metropolitan-Vickers. Roxbee Cox's diplomatic talents were exercised to the limit in keeping peace (through his Gas-Turbine Collaboration Committee) between these aero-engine companies and Frank Whittle himself, who, understandably, felt that Power Jets should build, fly and produce its own engines to his designs. That was, however, not government policy and in 1946, Power Jets was absorbed into the National Gas Turbine Establishment at Pyestock, under Roxbee Cox, at a time when he was also President of the Royal Aeronautical Society (1947-49) and a member of the Aeronautical Research Council. Meanwhile, on July 22, 1941, Roxbee Cox, with Air Marshal Linnell, had introduced an American aviation mission to the secrets of jet propulsion, leading on to manufacture in the United States. For this he was awarded the American Medal of Freedom with Silver Palm. In 1948, with that behind him, such was his reputation in the broad field of national technology that he was appointed to be Chief Scientist of the then vital Ministry of Fuel and Power, and, in the Birthday Honours of 1953, appointed a Knight Bachelor. In the same year, having diplomatically pointed out to the Committee of Scientific Manpower, (of which he was a member), that, out of the 52 Permanent Secretaries

of government departments, only one was a scientist (and he at the Ministry of Pensions), he retired from the Civil Service and became vice-chairman of the governing body of the College of Aeronautics at Cranfield, which he had helped to form in 1944. Thereafter, he returned to his previous hallmark as vice-chairman of the Council of the Air Registration Board, as well as the chairmanship of the National Council for Technological Awards, and embarked upon an industrial career, in which he collected a number of enjoyable directorships. Among them, in 1961, he became chairman of the Metal Box Company, and chairman of Berger Jensen and Nicholson. From 1961 to 1965 he was chairman of the Council of Scientific and Industrial Research, a director of Boulton Paul Aircraft, of Ricardo and Company, and of the Siedel Company, Wales. In 1965 Sir Harold Roxbee Cox was created a life peer, as Baron Kings Norton, sitting on the cross benches under the Labour administration of Harold Wilson. He was appointed chairman of the governing body of the College of Aeronautics and, in 1969, when it was granted a royal charter, he became the first Chancellor of the Cranfield Institute of Technology, while, between 1965 and 1972, he was chairman of the Air Registration Board. He was President of the Royal Institution from 1969 to 1976. From his contributions to the building of the airship R101 to those of the development of the jet engine, combined with his work on scientific research and on technical education, together with the receipt of so many academic honours, his career embraced an almost unrivalled record of service in Britain's national life. And to it all he brought great grace, humour and a lively sense of fun, not least appreciated in his regular speeches in the House of Lords, where he took an active part in debates on subjects which ranged from unidentified flying objects to the deterioration of the English language. In 1927 he had married Marjorie Pack of Northwood, by whom he had two sons. She died in 1980. In 1982, he married Joan Pascoe of Torquay, who survives him. She further enhanced his last, still active, 15 years, to which she brought much care and happiness.

JUZO ITAMI

Juzo Itami, Japanese film director, committed suicide on December 20 aged 64. He was born in Kyoto in 1933.

THE shock of Juzo Itami's dramatic death is heightened by the appearance on Tokyo streets today of the magazine *Fish*, containing an account and a photograph apparently suggesting that the film director was having an affair with an unnamed 26-year-old woman. Itami, having vigorously denied any improper relationship, on Saturday night jumped from the roof of the eight-story building where he had his office, leaving a note which said: "I love my innocence." It was not the first time that high drama had crossed over from the movies to enter his life. In 1992 he was attacked outside his home by knife-wielding yakuza gangsters and suffered serious lacerations on his face, neck and arms, requiring several weeks of recovery in hospital. The vicious assault followed the appearance of his film *Minbo no Onna* (The Gangster's Wife), which satirised greed and disloyalty within the yakuza establishment, Japan's version of the Mafia. Itami also had to resort to participating in a witness protection programme for his own safety, an experience which he used as a theme in his most recent film, *Masamune no Onna*, in which an actress, having witnessed a murder by a religious cult, testifies in the face of threats. Kyoto, where Juzo Itami was born, is not only the ancient capital of Japan, but was the birthplace in 1897 of the Japanese film industry. Juzo's father was the notable prewar director Mansaku Itami. A career as artist, essayist and television talk-show host was accompanied by early success in acting. Juzo Itami even appeared in films



by Western directors, such as Nicholas Ray's *55 Days in Peking* (1963) and Richard Brooks's *Lord Jim* (1965). It was not until he had reached 50 that he turned to directing his own screenplays, achieving an immediate critical and commercial success with *The Funeral*, alternatively known as *Death Japanese Style* (1984), a mordant and inventive black comedy on undertaking rituals. It was followed by the work that won him an international reputation, the brilliant "kooky" film *Tampopo* (1986), an enchanting gastronomic satire (he described it as a "ramen western") in which he artfully demonstrated the link between eating and sex, with constant close-ups of erotically mouthwatering dishes to provoke unrest in audience tastebuds. As in his first film and all that followed, heading the cast, and playing the eager proprietress of a noodle restaurant, was the incandescent actress Nobuko Miyamoto, his wife and muse, whose integral position in his life is shown by another passage in his suicide note which reads: "Please take care of Ms Miyamoto. She is the best wife, mother and actress in Japan." In accordance with his skills, uncommon in Japan, in



A scene from Itami's hit film *Tampopo* (1986)

presenting strong female characters, she was the lead in *A Taxing Woman* (1987), playing the fearless investigator of Japanese businessmen's padded expense accounts, and while life among the tax inspectors might seem to be an unpromising subject, it yielded so much rich comedy and box-office success that it was quickly followed by a sequel (*A Taxing Woman's Return*) the next year, in which she set out to net bigger fish, criminals engaged in big-time tax fraud. *A-Go-Go* (A Tale of a Gold-En Geisha), a memorable success at the 1990 Venice festival, was denied a proper release in Britain, where modern Japanese cinema is unjustly neglected. In it Miyamoto gave a superbly capable performance as a modern geisha, who although trained from adolescence to bring good fortune to powerful men, somehow retained her moral purity. The

director managed to combine humour with a sharp-edged, often brutal tone. Itami became the most internationally renowned Japanese director after Akira Kurosawa, who along with Onni and Buntel, exerted considerable influence on his work. His acerbic attacks on Japanese capitalism, organised crime, bureaucrats, the law, and his skill at combining satirical comedy with examinations of serious social issues, brought him huge popularity with domestic audiences, and respect abroad. At the time of his death he had plans to make a film based on the 1995 nerve-gas attack on the Tokyo metro by the Aum Shinrikyo doomsday cultists, who killed a dozen commuters. He leaves Nobuko Miyamoto, his widow, and their two sons.

HAROLD GENEEN

Harold Geneen, former chairman of the American multinational corporation ITT, died in New York on November 21 aged 87. He was born in Bournemouth on January 22, 1910.

HAROLD GENEEN belonged to the old school of corporate tycoons — visionary, outspoken, power-hungry and mercurial. In twenty years as chairman of ITT, he turned an unremarkable telecommunications company into a massive multinational conglomerate, increasing its sales from \$700 million to \$17 billion. Geneen was also the man at the helm when ITT was investigated for alleged tax abuses and influence peddling. He remained unrepentant throughout. For Harold Geneen, the only line was the bottom line. The historian of ITT, Anthony Sampson, in his book *The Sovereign State: The Secret History of ITT* (1973), wrote that under Geneen's leadership the company became so powerful it was accountable to no nation, "held together literally by one man against whom nobody dared argue." As for Geneen, "You read a book from beginning to end. You run a business the opposite way," he was fond of saying. "You start with the end and then you do everything you must to reach it." He once responded to accusations that he was an obsessive workaholic with the comment that he was "guilty as charged." Harold Sydney Geneen was born in Bournemouth, the son of a Russian Jewish concert manager and an Italian mother. The family left England before he was one year old, and he grew up in the United States. Working on the New York Stock Exchange by day and studying accountancy at night, Geneen had a series of financial posts in New York, developing his unique man-



agement style, before joining ITT as chairman in 1959. At that time, International Telephone and Telegraph was a loose conglomeration of Caribbean telephone companies which had been formed in 1920. Geneen's first move as chairman was to remove autonomy from managers, making them answerable to a centralised committee. Faced with the prospect of Latin American governments seeking to nationalise telecommunications companies, Geneen sold those interests and embarked on an aggressive acquisition programme within the United States. This he often did after little more than a 20-minute inspection of the company's accounts. Throughout the 1960s and 1970s more than 250 companies were added to the ITT portfolio, including Avis Car Rental, Sheraton Hotels, and interests in cosmetics, lightbulbs, books and hardware. The only areas in which he refused to invest were computers, airlines and films, which he believed to be too risky. "Not all of Geneen's takeover

attempts were successful. A bid for the American Broadcasting Company in 1966 was thwarted by the US Department of Justice, using anti-trust laws. And in the 1970s Geneen's reputation was to take a battering as the company faced allegations of tax evasion and rumours that ITT had offered cash to the CIA to undermine the Allende regime in Chile, which was planning to nationalise ITT operations there. ITT also came under the scrutiny of the Securities and Exchange Commission, the Watergate special prosecutor, the Federal Grand Jury and a Senate sub-committee on multinational corporations. It was Geneen's autocratic management style that became the stuff of legend. Although he drew a comparatively modest salary of \$1 million per year and asked to be called Harold, he inspired fear both internally and on Wall Street. ITT management meetings chaired by Geneen took place on the last Monday of each month in Brussels, and ran for four days in a room where the curtains were always drawn.

There Geneen subjected his managers to lengthy cross-examinations about profits and performance, and his blunt manner was said to make executives shake in terror. His motto was "I want no surprises," and he pulled his staff because, as he put it, "the worst disease which can afflict executives in their work is not alcoholism but egotism." However, after a period of rapid expansion, ITT fell into decline in the late 1970s, largely because of allegations of financial impropriety and bribery. Geneen stood down as chief executive in 1977 and as chairman in 1979. Following his departure, ITT started to break up. In retirement Geneen continued to buy and sell on his own account. "After I left, the company veered on to a new course, emphasising consolidation rather than growth. Often I have felt the stab of frustration and regret, wondering what might have been," he wrote in his last book, *The Synergy Myth*, which was published earlier this year. The book was his last chance to defend his own record and management style, while attacking modern corporate practices and concepts. He continued to champion the taking of calculated risks, worker empowerment, strong leadership and decisiveness. Surprisingly, in view of his own track record, he cast a critical eye over the 1990s' merger mania. Notwithstanding ITT's own growth through acquisition, he took to insisting that there was nothing to be gained from yoking together businesses with varying management styles and differing levels of competence. "If you mix beef broth, lemon juice and flour, you don't get magic, you get a mess," was his parting shot to the current generation of corporate leaders. Geneen's first marriage ended in divorce in 1946. He is survived by his second wife,

Church news

Appointments
The Rev James Cox, curate, Chelmsley Wood St Andrew (Birmingham), to be team vicar, Chelmsley Wood St Andrew (same diocese).
The Right David Evans, General Secretary, South American Mission Society, to be also honorary Assistant Bishop (Birmingham).
The Rev Jeanette Gosney, curate, Ipswich St Margaret (St Edmundsbury & Ipswich), to be chaplain, Loughborough University and Colleges (Leicester).
The Rev Gerald Hovenden, Team Vicar, Hempsall All Saints (Rochester), to be team rector, Southborough St Peter with Church and St Matthew (same diocese).
The Rev David Jackson, co-

rate, Eastham (Chester), to be priest-in-charge, Taverham St Edmund with Ringland (Norwich).
The Rev Paul Kerr, curate, Gillingham St Mark (Rochester), to be vicar, Rochester St Justus (same diocese).
The Rev Dr Richard Major, curate, Purney Common All Saints (Southwark), to be chaplain, Florence St Mark (Europe).
The Rev Linda Potter, curate, Shildon St John with Eldon (Durham), to be priest-in-charge, Castleside St John the Evangelist (same diocese).
The Rev Dr David Rake, vicar, Kaniworth St Nicholas (Coventry), to be priest-in-charge, Tinsagel St Matthea, and Bishop's adviser on spiritual formation (Truro).

The Rev John Russell, curate, Newport Pagnell with Lathbury and Moulsoe (Oxford), to be priest-in-charge, Wing with Grove (same diocese).
The Rev James Scantlebury, Falmouth All Saints (Truro), to be vicar, Harden St Saviour and Wilden (Bradford).
The Rev Michael Sears, with permission to officiate (Birmingham), to be team vicar, Solihull St Helen (same diocese).
The Rev Geoffrey Smith, vicar, Harlow St Mary Magdalene (Chelmsford), to be rector, Woodford St Mary with St Philip and St James (same diocese).
The Rev Andrew Spurr, curate, Stansted Mountfitchet with Birchbanger and Farnham (Chelmsford), to be

vicar (same benefice).
The Rev Michael Stagg, rector, Sparrowton with Beeston, and Rural Dean of Norwich North (Norwich), to be also Honorary Canon of Norwich Cathedral (same diocese).
The Rev Martin Stephenson, team rector, Clarendon Park, Knighton St John the Baptist with St Michael & All Angels (Leicester), to be priest-in-charge, Hall Green St Peter (same diocese).
The Rev Peter Stevens, rector, Moreton (St Nicholas) and Woodford with Tinkleton (Salisbury), to be honorary curate, Hordle, with special responsibility for Tiptoe St Andrew (Winchester).
The Rev Malcolm Strange, vicar, Newbury team (Oxford), to be rector, Torridge Estuary Team (Exeter).

HOW THE CHRISTMAS TREE CAME TO THE ENGLISH COURT SOME PRE-VICTORIAN OCCASIONS FROM A CORRESPONDENT

Although Queen Victoria and the Prince Consort made Christmas trees popular in England, it was not, as is generally supposed, the Prince who introduced them. Decorated trees were known at the Court of Queen Charlotte, German-born consort of King George III, in a biography of the Queen published in 1819, the year after her death. Dr. John Watkins records that she spent Christmas Day 1800 "in a very pleasing manner" at Queen's Lodge, Windsor, which stood opposite the South Terrace of the Castle. "Silly poor families had a substantial dinner given them, and in the evening the children of the principal families in the neighbourhood were invited to an entertainment at the Lodge. Here among other amusing objects for the gratification of the juvenile visitors, in the middle of the room stood an immense tub with a yew tree placed in it, from the branches of which hung bunches of sweetmeats, almonds and raisins

ON THIS DAY December 21, 1558

The Christmas tree was an ancient German custom and not a Victorian introduction. It may have been a remnant of the pageants of the Middle Ages.

in papers, fruits and toys, most tastefully arranged, and the whole illuminated by small wax candles. After the company had walked round and admired the tree, each child obtained a portion of the sweets which it bore, together with a toy, and then all returned home quite delighted. Christmas trees were reintroduced at Court by Queen Charlotte's daughter-in-law, Queen Adelaide, a princess of Saxe-Meiningen by birth. There were always trees at Queen Adelaide's Christmas parties. The memory of them was cherished by a child who was a guest every year: Mima Kennedy-Erskine, later Countess of Munster, whose mother, Lady

Augusta, was a daughter of King William IV by Mrs Jordan. Mima herself was born in 1830, the year of the king's accession. She adored her royal grandfather and his kind-hearted Queen, and when in old age she wrote "My Memories" recalled in affectionate detail those parties of her childhood. They were held every Christmas eve in the Dragon Room, at Brighton Pavilion, where Queen Adelaide used always "to prepare an enormous Christmas tree, which was lit up with tapers, while from the boughs were hung gilded fruits — apples, pears, walnuts &c. and innumerable gifts of value for her ladies and for the guests young and old." The Christmas tree had meanwhile been introduced also by the Duchess of Kent, a Coburg princess, for her daughter's enjoyment. At Kensington Palace on Christmas Eve, 1823, the future Queen Victoria (aged 13) wrote in her journal: "We then went into the drawing room near the dining room. After Mamma had rung a bell three times we went in. There were two large round tables on which were placed two trees hung with lights and sugar ornaments. All the presents being placed round the tree, I had one table for myself." Queen Victoria married Prince Albert of Saxe-Coburg & Gotha early in 1840. The Princess Royal was born in November...

NEWS

Blair takes charge of welfare reform

Tony Blair faced down the threat of a Cabinet mutiny over welfare reforms by taking charge himself. Rocked by David Blunkett's attack on proposals for cutting disability benefits, the Prime Minister staged an impromptu press conference at a football ground to declare that the system was not working and had to change.

He will now chair a new ministerial group on welfare reform, taking control of a process that had been headed by Gordon Brown. Pages 1, 4, 21

Oxbridge students face fees threat

Students at Oxford and Cambridge universities will have to pay fees of up to £4,000 a year under plans drawn up by college bursars to renounce £35 million in state support if a government review of their funding threatens the colleges' independence. Page 1

No idling

Drivers who leave their engines idling at the kerb may be fined £20 under a range of new anti-smog laws. Page 1

God and mammon

A message from the Archbishop of Canterbury was broadcast to 216 Asda supermarkets as the "highlight" of a carol service held at the group's store in Gravesend. But at least one shop turned the sound down. Page 1

Church parade

More than 100 police were used to protect 200 Roman Catholic worshippers from three dozen Protestants in a Saturday night ritual in Harryville, Ballymena. The campaign of intimidation has cost the RUC £2 million. Page 2

Killer escape

Bush bandits who ambushed and murdered a British couple in Mozambique have escaped from jail eight weeks after being given life sentences. Page 3

Skagness rules

Thousands may be heading for the ski slopes or the Caribbean; but the top Christmas destination this year is Skagness, which was booked up months ago. Page 5

Cyclists killed

Two brothers and their former brother-in-law were killed in a crash with an estate car as they rode mountain bikes along an unlit country lane in Blyth, Northumberland. Page 6

Princess remembered at the font

The names William and Harry soared in popularity immediately after the death of Diana, Princess of Wales, while Charles dipped dramatically, a survey of birth announcements in *The Times* shows. William appeared twice as often in September as it did in any other month. The top names were James and Olivia. Page 1

Duchess's day

The Duchess of York begins her Christmas holiday at Sandringham basking in the unusual glow of sympathetic press coverage. The friendly interest is ascribed to a hospital appointment. Page 7

Man's world

Women are still heavily outnumbered by men on public bodies, especially at the ministries of defence and agriculture. Page 8

Meningitis alert

Britain is suffering its worst outbreak of meningitis for fifty years. People are advised to check any rash with a glass. Page 9

Cheaper Christmas

The cost of an "average" family Christmas has fallen by £9 to £209.50, thanks to cheaper trolleys, trees and cards. Page 10

Final conflict

The biblical site of Armageddon in Israel is to be turned into an "intellectual theme park" for the millennium. Computer technology will enable pilgrims to experience the battle between good and evil that many believe will signal the end of the world. Page 11

Nuclear option

The Pentagon briefly considered launching a nuclear bomb to destroy Iraq's biological weapons, the NBC news network reported. The bomb, developed since the Gulf War, would have been used to penetrate an underground bunker. Page 13



The artist Sophie Garland with her work, *Indian Dream Machine*, in a paddock in Kerikeri, New Zealand. The sculpture, based on a 1942 motorcycle, is made of melted plastic crystals and measures 4m high by 10m long

IMF warnings

The International Monetary Fund believes that the Asian economic "contagion" will cut growth everywhere. Page 48

Erasmus holds fire: The launch of the Virgin One high interest savings account is to be delayed until next summer after Tesco was overwhelmed with applications for a similar account. Page 48

Bank statement: Berclays may have been rebuffed by NatWest as a merger partner, but its chief executive Martin Taylor believes that Europe and that further mergers are inevitable. Page 48

Flight of fancy: BAA has been transformed since privatisation, but has it gone too far and turned our airports into cluttered shopping centres? Page 44

Grand plan: Anjana Aluja meets Dr Toby Clark who wants to retrace Sir Edmund Halley's quest to chart compass variations. Page 16

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Great help?

Giles Whittell discovers the secrets of writing self-help books, while Jane Shilling analyses their advice. Page 17

Elusive Kathleen O'Rourke enters a world of conspiracy and intrigue when she goes in search of Lost-Las and Po. Page 17

Galliano fantasy: Cruise wear may have lost some of its cachet, but Grace Bradberry finds that the mid-season collection is catching on. Page 15

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Melvyn Bragg

"In 1997 I saw the perfect Fool. Michael Bryant took him on in the Richard Eyre National Theatre production and at last I believe I saw the Fool as he was meant to be." Page 18

Career high: All of a sudden, the actress Helena Bonham Carter is winning praise for her dramatic flair, especially in the forthcoming film *The Wings of the Dove*. Page 18

Fakeyale reviewed: At the Police Theatre in south London, Philip Pullman's adaptation and Vicky Ireland's production take *Puss in Boots* back to its 17th-century roots. Page 18

Jazz legend: Tomorrow night BBC2 celebrates the life of Sidney Bechet, the jazz saxophonist everyone wanted to emulate. Page 19

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IN THE TIMES

ARTS

James Levine

conducts Mahler's

Symphony of a

Thousand at London

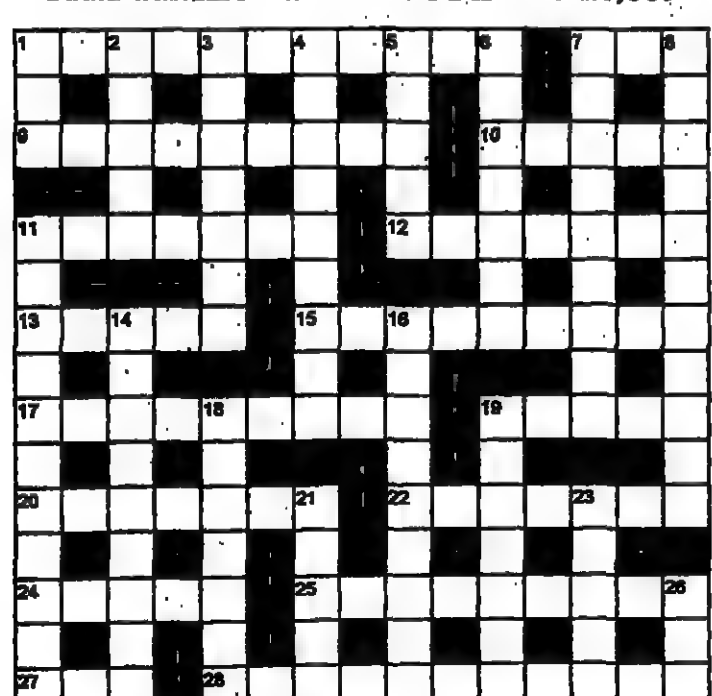
How can the Lord

Chancellor make

the legal profession

more popular?

THE TIMES CROSSWORD NO 20,669



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- 1 Playing a fanfare, and doing so well (11).
 - 7 Friend knocking back drink (5).
 - 9 Revolver that's used to secure an admission (9).
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 - 13 Highland feature it's good to see during trip (5).
 - 15 Recruitment of leaderless men inclined to join up (9).
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Hamed given food for thought in the Big Apple
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Why Hollioake should be appointed captain for the limited-overs internationals
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In praise of star quality
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TIMES SPORT

MONDAY DECEMBER 22 1997

CHAMPIONS RIDE LUCK ON WAY TO UNDESERVED VICTORY



Striking difference: Cole wheels away in triumph after rounding off a sweeping United move by heading the only goal of the match from a pinpoint cross by Beckham. Photograph: Marc Aspland

Cole extinguishes Newcastle

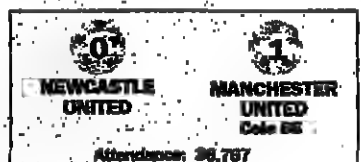
SOMEHOW, now that he is scoring freely again, Andy Cole has become the personification of everything that Newcastle United have lost. Yesterday, barracked and abused by the supporters that once worshipped him, battered and bruised by the players he once ran with, the Manchester United striker gave St James' Park a cruel reminder of past glories when he condemned the home side to a morale-sapping defeat they hardly deserved.

Denied twice by world-class saves from Peter Schmeichel, Newcastle had more than countered the threat of their visitors until they were undone by Cole's powerful and accurate header midway through the second half. It was the first goal he had scored at the Geordie shrine since November 1994, a couple of months before Kevin Keegan shocked Tyneside by selling him to United for £7 million.

The goal, Cole's sixteenth of the season, was the final confirmation of his recovery of the predatory form that made him such a cult hero in the North East. It began to erase the memory of the 5-0 drubbing United suffered there last season and took the champions four points clear of the chasing pack at the top of the FA Carling Premiership, apparent proof of the old adage that the team that wins the title is the one that picks up points even when they do not merit them.

"I think we were very lucky today," Alex Ferguson, the United manager, said. "If it had not been for Gary Pallister and Peter Schmeichel we would have been beaten. It was a careless performance. We were continuously giving the ball away and Newcastle were very unfortunate. We played better when we lost 5-0."

Kenny Dalglish, the Newcastle manager, was delighted with the commitment his team had shown, but said his enjoyment of the game had been spoilt by the antics of the United players. He singled out David Beckham for play-acting and getting Alessandro Pistone booked for an apparent kick to the United midfielder's face.



BY OLIVER HOLT
FOOTBALL CORRESPONDENT

er's face. "It was nowhere near his face," Dalglish said, "and that is not fair is it? It might improve his looks I suppose. The pictures do not lie, though, and if someone has done that, it will just have to be on their conscience."

There were seven bookings in a game that was bad-tempered at times but never really sank into genuine unpleasantness. It was atavistic, certainly, and Pearce and Batty, in particular, strove like men possessed, aggressive and unyielding, to try to

humble the team that is now 17 points clear of them in the race for the championship.

Keith Gillespie, too, seemed intent on making United pay for selling him to Newcastle as part of the deal that took Cole the other way and his early runs, coupled with the industry and control of Batty at the heart of midfield, left United looking as uncomfortable as they have at any time since Derby County ran them ragged for a 20-minute period at Pride Park earlier this season.

When John Barnes, a player not renowned for his tackles, dispossessed Nicky Butt, someone who is justly famous for his, midway through the first half, it was the clearest indication possible that this was a Newcastle side itching to prove its mettle. After 24 minutes, they seemed to have taken the lead when Barnes guided a cross from Pearce inside Schmeichel's post but the United goalkeeper somehow flung

TOP OF TABLE

Team	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Man Utd	19	13	4	2	46	18	42
Blackburn	19	11	4	4	36	19	36
Chelsea	19	12	2	5	45	19	38
Leeds	19	10	4	5	29	19	34
Liverpool	18	9	4	5	31	17	31
Arsenal	18	8	6	4	32	21	30
Derby	19	8	5	6	33	27	29
Leicester	19	7	6	6	22	18	27
Newcastle	18	7	5	6	20	22	26

himself to his left and clawed the header away.

The first half was relentless. Every free kick was taken quickly, every tackle was full-blooded, every Newcastle attack was roared on by thousands of frantic voices. United weathered it all, though. Pallister was superb at the centre of defence, the rock on which the invention of Asprilla and Barnes always founded.

Gradually, Newcastle began to allow United back into the game.

Hislop saved well from Cole after the United striker had escaped from Pearce for the first time and then Giggs struck a fierce right-foot volley dipping just over the crossbar.

The second half continued in the same vein, Newcastle pressing but hindered by lack of attacking firepower, United attempting what counter-attacks they could. Their goal came from one in the 68th minute. Giggs broke out from a Newcastle corner and slipped the ball to Phil Neville, who passed it to Scholes. Scholes laid it out to Beckham on the right wing and his cross eluded Barton and found Cole at the back post. His header, across Hislop, soon nestled in the bottom left-hand corner of the net.

United could have put the game out of reach two minutes later but Hislop blocked Giggs's low shot with his knee. Scholes had another chance to seal victory but he sidefooted a cross from Giggs just over the bar. In the eighteenth minute, Schmeichel repeated his heroics when he hurled himself through the air to turn a bullet header from Pearce round the post.

In the dying seconds, Asprilla wasted his team's best opportunity when he ran on to Batty's volleyed pass but lobbed his shot over Schmeichel and the crossbar. He held his head in his hands and when the final whistle went the United players rushed to congratulate Schmeichel. "His first save was in the excellent category," Ferguson said afterwards. "The second was unbelievable."

NEWCASTLE UNITED (3-5-1-1) S Hislop — D Pearson, S Pearce, P Albert (sub: W Barlow, 54min) — B Watson, K Gillespie, D Batty, J Beardsford (sub: T Keshan, 75), A Pistone — J Barnes — F Asprilla.

MANCHESTER UNITED (4-4-2) P Schmeichel — G Neville, G Pallister, R Johnson, P Neville — D Beckham, N Butt, P Scholes (sub: O G Solorzano, 72), R Giggs — E Shearman (sub: B McClair, 84), A Cole.

Referee: P. Jones.

Glorious Ginola, page 28
Vintage Chelsea, page 29
Results and tables, page 30
Harford breaks duck, page 31
Lynne Truss, page 33

HOW UNITED LEFT NEWCASTLE IN THEIR WAKE

Results since corresponding fixture last year	Played	Won	Drawn	Lost	For	Against	Points
MANCHESTER UNITED (4-4-2)	47	29	12	6	102	48	99
NEWCASTLE (4-4-2)	46	18	16	12	73	52	70

In 1973, Manchester Utd were four points clear at Christmas and finished the season in eighth place.

Newcastle under Kenny Dalglish (since Jan 14): P: 32 W: 15 D: 13 L: 8 F: 53 A: 35 Pts: 56

WHAT THEY SAID

ALEX FERGUSON 1996
When you lose 5-0, you take your medicine and go home. We can take it, we'll be okay. We could have scored five goals ourselves. It was an unusual game, the biggest defeat of my career as a manager, but I put it down as a blip, we'll go on from here."

KEVIN KERRAN 1996
Unfortunately, the League won't give us more than three points for it, but I awoke yesterday to criticism, some of it from top people, about the way we are doing it. We opened up today, we played our way, we proved that the League can be won by attacking football."

DALGLISH YESTERDAY
I'm not very good at maths, know there's a lot of points to play for. But you have to hold up your hat to Alex Ferguson and his team."



In the corresponding fixture last year, Newcastle, under Kenny Dalglish, won 5-0 to move their head at the top of the Premiership table with 24pts after 10 games, five points ahead of Manchester United, who had four from four to fifth. By the end of the season, United were champions, on 75 points, with Newcastle second, seven points behind.

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BASKETBALL

Bears pay for their defensive weakness

By NICHOLAS HARLING

THE dismay of missing out on a place in the Sainsbury's Classic national cup final will stay with Birmingham Bulls until well into next year. But while there is still a Budweiser League title at stake and the possibility of progress in the United Nations Trophy, the Bulls will not be feeling sorry for themselves.

Only three days after losing their cup semi-final to Thames Valley Tigers by a single point on aggregate, the Bulls were back in the winning groove on Saturday. Worthing Bears, rehabilitating after a mid-season financial drama, were the team to suffer. Even though a bruised retina continues to keep Tony Dorsey out, the Bulls were good value for a 102-87 victory that took them to the top for the first time this season.

The Bears paraded Greg Francis for the first time. Offensively, the American guard was excellent, contributing 31 points, including five three-pointers, but a lack of resolution in defence prevented his debut from being a total success. The Bulls exploited the weakness with both Nigel Lloyd and Reggie Kirk collecting 23 points for the visitors from the back court, one more than H.L. Coleman, who, in Dorsey's absence, has responded to the extra demands required of him under the boards.

Leading 46-36 at the interval, the Bulls made their decisive move in a 13-0 onslaught. The story was much the same at Wembley Court last night, when the Bears were overwhelmed 97-63 by the London Towers, whose second-quarter burst of 26-7 took them well clear. With Francis scoring only four points, his fellow newcomers, Joel Burns, assumed the scoring responsibility by adding to his 18 against the Bulls with another 20. Martin Gottfried (23 points) was top scorer for the Towers.

With a game in hand on the Towers, the Bulls are in a healthy position and it will be healthier still once Dorsey returns, probably against the Leopards on January 4.

The Leopards' title defence is fading after their 107-99 defeat on Friday away to Thames Valley Tigers, who managed to repeat their cup quarter-finals success over the double-winners of last season. The Leopards made up 17 points to lead by three, yet still succumbed to their fifth league reverse.

It is not a record that dampens the spirits of the Leopards' joint-owner, Ed Simmons. "We haven't relinquished our grip on the title yet," he said. "Any team in the top eight can beat any other team and I can see a club winning the title with as many as ten losses."

Leicester Riders, who are Thames Valley's cup final opponents in Sheffield on January 17, also maintained the good work, leaving the bottom club, Watford Royals, still without a league win.

Results, page 38

BBC throws down World Cup gauntlet

John Goodbody reveals Corporation plans to engage ITV in a head-on battle for viewers in France next year

THE BBC intends to televise all England and Scotland matches in the World Cup finals in France next summer, which will pitch the Corporation into an unprecedented head-to-head battle for viewers with ITV.

Although the two terrestrial channels are in gentlemanly negotiations, which were expected to lead to them alternating the group matches as they have in the past, the BBC is now determined to show that it remains a force to be reckoned with in football coverage. Like its presenter, Gary Lineker, the BBC is "no longer Mr Nice Guy".

The BBC is making the decision because it knows that when it goes head-to-head with ITV it invariably attracts two thirds of the viewing audience. When England met West Germany in the 1990 World Cup semi-finals, 25.2 million watched the game, the largest audience in the history of British television. Some 16.7 million of that number were tuned in to the BBC.

BBC sources say that ITV will have the option of either stepping away from the six England and Scotland pool matches or suffering another series of defeats.

The move by the BBC negotiators, Jonathan Martin, controller of TV sport, and Niall Sloane, head of football, will revive the sagging morale of their team, including their leading presenter, Desmond Lynam, and the commentators, John Motson and Barry Davies, who have become increasingly frustrated at losing so much of the national game to Sky and ITV.

The recent move of Brian Barwick, the BBC head of sport, to ITV was symptomatic of the malaise.

Davies, who has reported every World Cup since 1970, said last week: "In the light of

all the football we've lost, this is a golden opportunity just to remind people what we're capable of doing — and how well we can cover the sport."

"It would be a huge boost to motivate a department which for years set the standard and which has been made to feel like the poor relations."

This season, the BBC is showing none of the three domestic tournaments, live, being restricted to *Match of the Day* highlights on Saturdays.

For the first time, ITV is screening the FA Cup Final live and exclusively, so ending 60 years of BBC coverage of the game's premier cup competition. Sky will screen around 200 matches live this season, including international, Premiership games and Football League fixtures.

HOW THE WINNERS COMPARE	
1990 World Cup semi-final (England v West Germany)	BBC 12.6m
1990 World Cup semi-final (Italy v Brazil)	ITV 4.1m
1990 Euro66 semi-final (England v Germany)	BBC 17.5m
1990 Euro66 semi-final (Germany v Czech Rep)	ITV 6.3m
1985 FA Cup final (Manchester United v Everton)	BBC 12.6m
1985 FA Cup final (Wimbledon v Liverpool)	ITV 4.2m
1985 FA Cup final (Manchester United v Everton)	BBC 11.3m
1985 FA Cup final (Wimbledon v Liverpool)	ITV 5.8m
1985 FA Cup final (Manchester United v Everton)	BBC 8.5m
1985 FA Cup final (Wimbledon v Liverpool)	ITV 4.0m

ITV, which has increasingly had a policy of "cherry-picking" when covering sport, will be incensed at the BBC's planned action because it has been preparing sponsorship of its coverage of the World Cup, which begins on June 10 with Brazil's game against

Scotland and finishes on July 12.

However, since the BBC and ITV are both members of the European Broadcasting Union, which has the continental rights to the tournament, the two British channels are entitled to show

any of the fixtures in the 32-nation competition.

In the past, they have alternated the pool games and have only gone into direct opposition later in the tournament, because it was felt viewers had so little in the way of alternatives. However, with the launch of Channel 5, there are now three other channels available to most of the public.

The BBC feels that, given the unprecedented interest in the event, it is entitled to show all the group matches, beginning with the game between Scotland and the defending champions.

Unlike some previous tournaments, few of the games have the same kick-off times, which will allow many European television viewers to see most matches live. England have one afternoon and two evening kick-offs in their preliminary group, while Scotland have two afternoon matches and one in the evening.

TV action replay, page 33

EQUESTRIANISM: EUROPEAN CHAMPION ENJOYS LUCK OF THE DRAW TO COMPLETE THIRD VICTORY

Beerbaum scales new heights in Olympia mastery

By JENNY MACARTHUR

LUDGER BEERBAUM, already the winner of the Volvo World Cup qualifier and the UBS Christmas Puissance, continued his domination of the Olympia showjumping championships yesterday when he and Sprehe Rush On won the Vink Christmas Masters after an exhilarating display of jumping in front of a capacity crowd of 6,500.

"It's unbelievable — things are going so well," Beerbaum, the European champion, said after his victory, which added £15,500 to the £25,000 he won with PS Primas in the qualifier and the £3,700 with Alex in the puissance event.

The German's triumph came at the expense of Michael Whitaker, of Great Britain, on Virtual Village Ashley. He was the only other rider to go clear in the fourth and final jump-off when several of the six fences stood at 5ft 5in.

Under the rules of the winner-takes-all competition, each rider chooses one fence to be raised before his round. If he jumps clear, the prize money goes up by £500, but if more than one is faultless in the final round, it is the last rider to jump clear who wins.

Four horses reached the final jump-off. Whitaker, drawn first, completed a superb clear round with Ashley, who made light of the huge 5ft 5in wide oxer at fence No 2. When his older brother, John, on Virtual Village Grannusch, dropped out of contention at the double, followed by Willi Melliger, the Swiss Olympic silver medal-winner, who incurred four faults on Domina at fence No 4, only Beerbaum, the 1992 Olympic champion, stood between Michael Whitaker and £15,500.

Beerbaum asked for fence No 1 to be raised, as he had done in each round. "It was the easiest fence with the heaviest, deepest oxer," he said. It now stood at 5ft 7in — a daunting size for a first fence by any standards.

However, Sprehe Rush On, who had been specially aimed at this class "because he is careful and scopey", according to Beerbaum, comfortably negotiated it. Jumping effortlessly over the rest of the huge course, Beerbaum punched the air with delight at the finish. "I felt sorry for Michael," he said. "My horse was jumping very carefully, but I needed the luck of the draw to win."

Results, page 38

There was little luck involved in the German's stylish win on Primas in the World Cup qualifier on Saturday. Olympia, with nine out of the top ten riders in the world rankings competing, was always destined to be one of the hardest to win of the 16 qualifiers, and so it proved.

On a different occasion, the two superb rounds on Nuistra by the runner-up, Peter Charles, the former European champion, would have been good enough, but Beerbaum is in superb form and Charles's performance provided an added spur.

Nine went clear over Bob Ellis's acclaimed course in the opening round. Surprisingly, Geoff Billington, on It's Ono, who finished in third place, was the only Briton. John Whitaker, the bookmakers' favourite, had four faults on

Virtual Village Grannusch, his top horse, Welham, having been kept out of the competition with a minor leg injury.

Of the other leading Britons, Michael Whitaker, on Two Step, hit the big spread fence at No 10. Nick Skelton retired on Virtual Village Zelta after incurring eight faults and Robert Smith, whose top horse, Tees Hanauer, is also injured, had 12 faults on Senator For The Best.

In the jump-off, Charles, meeting every fence on a perfect stride on his outstanding young horse, set the standard with a clear round in 39.60sec, but Beerbaum, going sixth — and riding Primas with increased confidence after their win in the Berlin Grand Prix last month — cut more than a second off the Irishman's time.

"He has a big heart when it's against the clock," Beerbaum said of his 15-year-old horse, which he started riding 18 months ago.

Billington, the last to go, took John Whitaker's advice to "go carefully" to the wide oxer at fence No 2 too literally and, going wide to the fence, used up vital seconds. "From then on I was always struggling," the ever-cheerful Billington said.

The disappointing performance meant that Smith, who was fifth in Brussels and Berlin and sixth in Amsterdam, remains the only Briton in the top 20 of the World Cup rankings, from which the top 19 qualify for the final in Helsinki in April. John Whitaker, who has qualified for every World Cup final except one since the competition started in 1979, is trailing in joint 55th place.



Beerbaum, the German who has been in superb form, in action yesterday

SAILING: WOMAN SWINGS HIGH ABOVE DECK LIKE A PENDULUM IN DRAMATIC RACE TO SYDNEY

Man washed overboard in rough seas

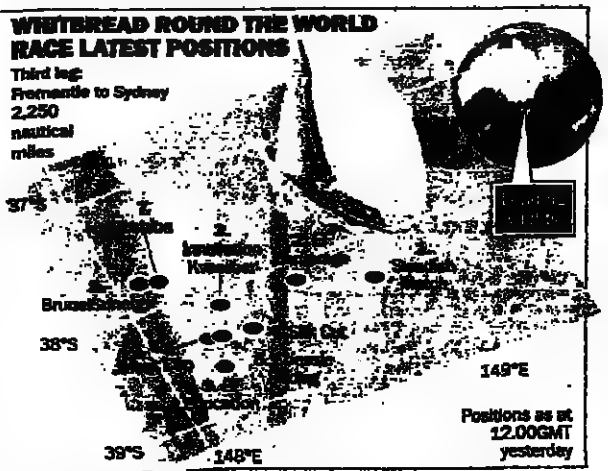
By EDWARD GORMAN, SAILING CORRESPONDENT

THE Whitbread Round the World Race fleet was yesterday "rock-hopping" up the southeast coast of Australia to an expected finish to leg three at Sydney today, after a rough passage through the Bass Strait, which saw a man overboard on *Intown* Kvaerner and the all-women crew on *EF Education* coming close to losing their rig.

The drama on *Kvaerner* happened as the fleet finally came together with the northernmost boats and those to the south converging on the entrance to the Strait on Saturday night. *Kvaerner* and *Swedish Match* were the only boats to leave King Island to port, at the western entrance, where crews encountered a nasty swell.

Fearing for the safety of his weakened rig, as *Kvaerner* pounded upwind in about 24 knots of breeze, Knut Frostad, the skipper, ordered a sail-change at around midnight to slow the boat. Alf Pratt, an Australian sailmaker on board, was among those who went on the foredeck to hand the sail, but was washed overboard, forcing Frostad to drop all his canvas and turn the engine on.

Pratt, who had a strobe light on his foul weather jacket, was swiftly recovered unharmed.



WINTERHEAD ROUND THE WORLD RACE LATEST POSITIONS
Third leg: Fremantle to Sydney
2,250 nautical miles
Positions as at 22.00GMT yesterday

DISTANCE TO FINISH (at 12.00GMT yesterday, with miles to Sydney): 1. Swedish Match (Swe) 307.5 miles; 2. EF Language (Swe) 311.4; 3. Innovation Kvaerner (Nor) 320.4; 4. Silk Cut (GB) 320.6; 5. Channel Racing (US) 325.3; 6. Merit Cup (Mexican) 325.4; 7. Teche (US) 325.8; 8. BrunelSunergy (Nor) 327.8; 9. EF Education (Swe) 335.7.

for using her engine to recover a man overboard, which is allowed for in the sailing instructions. Frostad was required to return to the spot where he switched the engine on before hoisting his sails again and to have resealed the engine controls and photographed them to comply with race rules.

The incident delayed *Kvaerner*, but not much, in

the end, her southerly course towards the Strait paid off, bringing her back to the fleet in the top three, and even after stopping briefly, she was still in third place behind Paul Cayard, on *EF Language*, and Gunnar Krantz, on *Swedish Match*.

On the all-women boat, one crisis quickly developed into another. Not far from where Frostad had got into difficulties, the women were getting lifted round the northern end of King Island. They were hard on the wind and had enough leverage to avoid a tack, which was just as well because had they done so, they would have brought their mast down.

While tidying up the halcyons after a sail change, Lisa Charles and Marien Cleynard spotted that the leeward checkstay and starboard runner had come off the mast and were being held aloft by nothing more than bungee cord. In rough conditions, with the boat slamming in a short sea, Leah Newbold was sent up the rig. As she was being hauled up past the top spreader — about 70ft above the deck — she lost her grip on the mast.

Her skipper, Christine Guillou, said: "She swung

wildly into the sails and back into the rig a couple of times like a human pendulum, hanging completely upside down in her harness at one stage."

Bruised and shaken, Newbold was retrieved and Bridget Suckling went up in her place to refasten the wayward terminals. The women lost several miles in the process and can rightly feel frustrated to be running last, eight miles behind *BrunelSunergy*, in eighth place at the end of an upwind leg, when they have given the lower-ranked male boats a real run for their money.

The fleet was still tightly bunched as the crews encountered lighter air inshore on their way to Sydney. Krantz, farthest offshore, was leading from Cayard, just 1.9 miles astern of him, with a gap of eight miles to *Kvaerner* in third place. *Silk Cut*, in fourth place, has come back from falling into sixth position overnight and is now only 0.6 miles behind *Kvaerner*, but with the field so tightly entangled, the podium places were still very much up for grabs.

The leader is expected to cross the line by Sydney Opera House this morning.

Whitelaw hoping for world glory as top Canadian

GREG RUSEDSKI eat your heart out (David Rhys Jones writes). The tennis-playing Canadian's well-documented transatlantic exchange has been completed, in reverse, by a 27-year-old Scot, George Whitelaw, who will represent Canada in the Saga world indoor bowls championships at Preston next month.

Whitelaw, who lives in Stonehouse, near Glasgow, won the Scottish outdoor singles championship in 1993, but failed to catch the eye of his national selectors and came up with an audacious and alternative plan.

Although he is a Scot through and through, he was born in Canada and possesses a Canadian passport — so he joined the Aurora bowls club in Ontario and entered the Canadian championship this winter.

Most places go to provincial champions, but Laura Bowls Canada keep six places for the winners of an all-countries competition. Whitelaw duly earned his wild-card place, then emerged from a strong 32-person field last week to win the title.

His reward was an automatic place at Preston, where he will wear the colours of his adopted country, and will partner Noel Kennedy, of Hong Kong, in the pairs.

If he survives his first round singles encounter with the No 11 seed, Rowan Brasher, of New Zealand, he could face his fellow Scot, David Gourlay, the 1996 world champion, for a place in the quarter-finals.

Dan Wolfenden, the executive director of Laura Bowls Canada, said: "George played it by our rules and is a worthy champion. He's a talented player who has won people around by his skill and demeanour."

Bryant rolls back the years to run his rivals close

ALTHOUGH he was beaten 15-8 by Andy Thomson in the semi-finals of the revived Saga International Masters at Thornaby yesterday, David Bryant, of Cleveland, stole the show with a display that reminded spectators of the days when he was the sport's undisputed leading man (David Rhys Jones writes).

It is 15 years since the Masters was last played but, in the 1970s, when it was called the Teesside Masters, it was one of the biggest tournaments on the calendar. Bryant dominated the event for 12 years, winning it more often than now. Now 66 and playing strictly for fun, he showed that a good time can indeed be played on an old fiddle, coming through his round robin with three wins in three matches.

That set Bryant up for a nostalgic encounter with Norma Shaw — whom he played many times in the 1970s and 1980s — who enjoys a similar reputation among women bowlers to his own in the men's game. Although Shaw, who won the world indoor singles title last April, has beaten most of the top male bowlers of her generation, she was never beat Bryant, but here, out of the blue, was her chance. Shaw led 6-4 after five ends but Bryant tightened his grip, allowing her only three singles over the next ten ends as he piled up four singles, two doubles and a treble to win, 15-9.

Bryant dropped the first ten shots against Thomson but replied defiantly with a full-house, before he gave best to the Anglo-Scot. In the final, Thomson was caught by Glenn Skipp, the local hope, at 12-12, but moved up a gear over the last two ends to win 15-12.

Results, page 38

SPORT IN BRIEF

Royle is favourite for job at Hawthorns

FOOTBALL: Joe Royle has emerged as favourite to fill the vacant managerial position at West Bromwich Albion (Richard Hobson writes). The National League first division club are preparing to interview five candidates today and tomorrow with David Platt, Bruce Riech, Denis Smith, and Wim van Hanegem, the former Holland midfield player, also in contention.

Although Van Hanegem, an experienced coach in Holland, would represent the most imaginative choice, Royle, who left Everton by mutual consent last March, better meets the criteria laid down by the club's chairman. Royle was manager of the Oldham Athletic side that reached the top flight in 1991 despite working on limited resources.

Smith to decide

SWIMMING: Michelle Smith, the triple Olympic gold medal-winner from Ireland, will probably swim the 800 metres freestyle at the world championships in Perth, Australia, next month. Smith said that she would make a final decision after swimming the 100 metres freestyle at the grand prix meeting in Bordeaux today. After finishing second in the 200 metres individual medley in 2min 26.39sec yesterday, Smith said: "That wasn't as good as I hoped." She injured her neck in a car crash seven weeks ago.

Parry power

GOLF: Craig Parry, of Australia, maintained his recent run of form when he won the Coolom Classic in Queensland yesterday. Parry went round in 70, 68, 71 and 67 for a 12-under-par total of 276 to beat Robert Allenby, his compatriot, by three strokes.

Sculthorpe bid

RUGBY LEAGUE: Si Helens are expected to sign Paul Sculthorpe, 20, the Great Britain forward, from Warrington in a £30,000 deal. The clubs have agreed a deal which involves cash and players.

Corbett's title

BOXING: Darren Corbett retained his Commonwealth cruiserweight title by the narrowest of margins on Saturday, outpointing Rob Norton, of Birmingham, 118-114 at the Mansfield Leisure Centre, Belfast.

Bolsum's treble

ATHLETICS: Liam Bolsum, of Dulwich College, won the old boys' invitation cross-country race at Wimbledon Common for the third year running, in a record time of 20min 46sec.

Srikumar Sen, boxing correspondent, finds a champion with cause for concern

Hamed is forced to learn his lesson

Naseem Hamed has gone away on two weeks' holiday in the United States, well deserved after his exertions outside the ring and in it to win recognition here. By the time he returns home to Sheffield, no doubt he will have got over the fight he received in his bout with Kevin Kelley, of New York, at Madison Square Garden on Friday, but it is to be hoped that he will not have forgotten the lessons learnt from that contest.

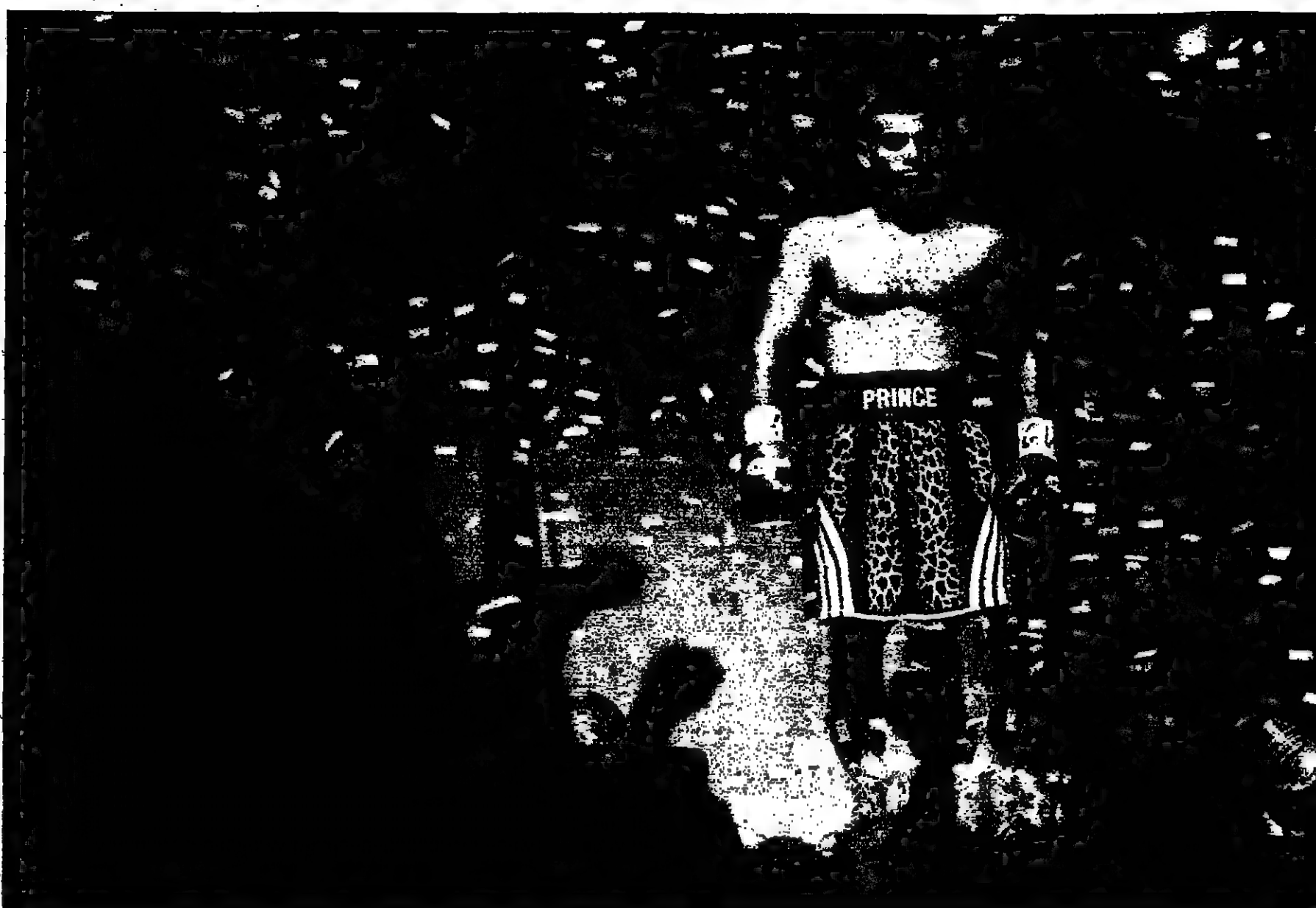
Never mind that he stopped Kelley in the fourth round, the fact that Hamed himself was dropped three times was a matter for concern to himself and his backers. Yesterday, Hamed was a suitably chastened and wiser man as a result of that experience. His friends and admirers were not as aggressively upbeat as usual. They had suffered palpitations and were thankful that Hamed carried the punch to save their blushes and the World Boxing Organisation (WBO) featherweight title. There was little doubt that without that knockout punch he would have been beaten as he was being outboxed and outpunched by the 30-year-old former world champion.

It was refreshing to hear Hamed admit that his performance was not all that it should have been. "I deserved to be criticised for fighting the way I did," he said. "But you must admit it was exciting stuff and I actually enjoyed it. But I realise if I go on fighting like this I will get into trouble. I was disappointed with myself and getting hit the way I did. I must not let it happen again. I must remember to keep my head down and my hands up."

"Surprisingly, I didn't feel as confident in the Garden as I thought I would have been. I had trouble with my entrance. I would have been much happier in Sheffield or London. At least I proved I have a good chin and the heart of a lion and give value for money."

"Despite what anyone says, I am still a winner. Kelley caught me with some terrific shots. I was shaken and stunned, but I was able to take his shots and he could not take mine. It was as simple as that."

Frank Warren, Hamed's promoter, after berating British boxing writers for criticising Hamed's flaws, admitted that the champion's performance had left him with his heart in his mouth. "We are doing 90 per cent of the right things as far as his career is concerned; ten per cent last night was him throwing it all out of the window. If he drops his hands and stands square in front of people, of course... I shouldn't think he is going to



The Madison Square Garden crowd is in uproar as Hamed makes a ticker-tape entrance for the contest in a blaze of lights. Photograph: John Dunn

fight like that. He went in to trade and excite the crowd and threw caution to the winds."

Warren said that after the weigh-in Hamed and Kelley had agreed not to run and to test each other's chins. It was Hamed's chin that first felt the pain. How undignified to find himself on the floor after the painful entrance. Hamed was down again in the second, but he decked Kelley. In the third, Hamed boxed on the retreat but once again touched the floor in the fourth before taking control and knocking Kelley out with two lefts.

Whatever the reason for Hamed's disappointing performance, two interpretations can be put on it. One, that Hamed was exposed as a flawed fighter and that his chin and boxing are not sound enough to see him through against quality opponents yet to come. If a 30-year-old former champion will past his best can prove too quick for Hamed and expose his deficiencies, what would he do with a young ambitious fighter with a good chin? At the moment, the division is a weak one and there is little prospect of such a man emerging in the immediate future but for a man who has aspirations to be a great fighter, the future does not look bright as

his publicist would have you believe. The other view is quite the opposite: that Hamed proved he has a good chin and can get up and take control without getting flustered. The performance should be seen as an aberration. His heart and punching power is enough to establish him as one of the world's leading boxers.

The New York papers were generally kind to Hamed but did not give him critical acclaim. One or two did comment that he still has a long way to go before he can claim he is destined to be a legend. The *Daily News* said: "He came in

like Kid Confront and fought like Kid Counterfeit. Prince? Naseem Hamed was on his way to being as successful as George III in this country. He won but he did not conquer." The *Daily Post* said: "He's no Willie Pep," and reported Kelley as saying: "I've got to tell you he's no Roy Jones."

Pep, one of the greatest featherweights of all time, watched the bout in his home in Connecticut. He said Hamed was too easy to hit, a fault he had to correct if he wants to progress. "He's got a good punch and is exciting to watch. That's what the public want. To see fighters going down and getting up."

But Pep, who had 242 contests and won 230 of them before being given his status of greatness, added: "Really he should not be getting hit like that, that's how six-round fighters fight."

Larry Merchant, the HBO commentator, was more positive. "I didn't think Hamed was seriously hurt and was off balance much of the time. Sometimes the arrogance of youth finds itself sitting on the canvas but when he got right back up again and did his stuff, it showed he's a real fighter. What will happen in the future we can't tell, but this is his time, we have got to enjoy it while it's here."

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I find myself leaning towards the second interpretation of the contest. Hamed should be given a chance to put the performance behind him. He can do it, providing he does not tighten up his boxing but loosens it up and moves back to his own distinctive style.

Hamed's chin did cause some concern but he should be able to keep it out of harm's way if he stops trying to box and goes back to the Brendan Ingle school of boxing. Herol Graham, who also had the same style as Hamed, got himself into trouble trying to box and fight but when he went back to what Ingle had taught him he was on top.

That long, spearing jab that Hamed throws from afar would almost certainly see him through in a bout with Arturo Gatti, the tough Canadian. If he boxes Gatti in the traditional manner, Hamed will get knocked out. That contest has yet to be arranged. And it could take place during Wimbledon fortnight in London. A win over Gatti would certainly put Hamed on the road to recognition.

In the meantime, it would be to Hamed's credit and advantage, certainly when in the United States to stop comparing himself with great men such as Muhammad Ali and Pep, Sandy Saddler and Henry Armstrong. Hamed's new-found knowledge about the frailties of his central nervous system could help him to realise that, before reaching the status of the greats, he must match up to the achievements of lesser champions like Salvador Sanchez, Alex Arguello, Azumah Nelson, Wilfredo Gomez, Eusebio Pedraza.

From the point of view of entertainment and excitement, Hamed was an unqualified success. The Garden has not seen such a night for a long time. It was the highest grossing featherweight contest, taking \$800,000 (about £500,000) from more than 11,000 people at the gate. Among the celebrities were the film stars Pierce Brosnan, Hugh Grant, Liam Neeson and Daniel Day-Lewis. As Merchant said: "People will be talking about this fight for a long time. Hamed's zany antics and high-wire act without a net makes him exciting to watch."

Hamed has brought the lighter divisions into focus, just as Ali was responsible for bringing big purses to the heavyweight division, so Hamed can be thanked by his opponents for paydays that can secure their future. That guarantees the 23-year-old from Sheffield a place in the history books.

SIX OF THE BEST: HOW THE PRINCE COMPARES WITH THE KINGS



Willie Pep (US)
Born: Sept 19, 1922
Titles: New York recognition as featherweight champion 1942-46; world champion 1946-48, 1949-1950
Record: 242 contests; won 230, drew 1, lost 11



Joseph 'Sandy' Saddler (US)
Born: June 23, 1928
Titles: world featherweight champion 1948-49, 1950-57
Record: 192 contests; W 144, D 2, L 18



Wilfredo Gomez (P Rico)
Born: Oct 29, 1964
Titles: WBC super-bantamweight 1977-80; featherweight 1984; WBA, IBF, lineal featherweight 1985-89
Record: 148 contests; W 44, D 1, L 3

One of the greatest. Considered the best pure boxer of all time. Very difficult to hit. Had four classic encounters with Sandy Saddler at Madison Square Garden in 1950, Polo Grounds in 1951. Saddler won first, third and fourth.

Arch-rival of Willie Pep. At 5ft 8in, Saddler was tall for a featherweight and combined his physical advantages with fierce hitting power. Renowned for his grasp of the dirtier aspects of boxing. He retired in 1957 while still champion after sustaining injuries in a car crash.

Tough, uncompromising, forward-moving boxer, who allowed opponents little respite. Avoided by contenders seeking an easy route to the top. Knocked out by Azumah Nelson in 11 rounds in 1984, but came back to win his third title at a different weight a year later.



Alexis Arguello (Nic)
Born: April 19, 1952
Titles: WBA featherweight 1974-77; WBC super-featherweight 1978-80; lineal featherweight 1981-85
Record: 87 contests; W 80, L 7



Azumah Nelson (Ghana)
Born: Feb 19, 1969
Titles: WBC featherweight champ 1984-88; super-featherweight champ 1988-94, 1995
Record: 45 contests; W 38, D 2, L 4



Naseem Hamed (GB)
Born: Feb 12, 1974
Titles: WBO featherweight champ 1996-present
Record: 29 contests; W 29

One of the most polished performers of the division, this Nicaraguan boxer has proved himself a warrior through and through. A stalking type of fighter, slow but relentless, who could cut down the ring effectively. A big puncher with both hands, but particularly effective with the right.

The resilient, ageing African has proved himself a warrior through and through. A stalking type of fighter, slow but relentless, who could cut down the ring effectively. A big puncher with both hands, but particularly effective with the right.

Can box southpaw or orthodox. Claims to be able to box in five different ways. Difficult to hit because of excellent reflexes; can hit from any angle going back or forward. Considered by some to be the hardest puncher, pound-for-pound, in the world.



The champion is rocked by Kelley in the second round



Hamed is able to smile again after flooring Kelley

SKIING: AUSTRIAN SURVIVES STEEP AND DAMAGED COURSE TO RECORD SECOND WORLD CUP VICTORY OF HIS CAREER

Mayer plays game of risk

IT TOOK a four-year wait and a lot of hard work for Christian Mayer to win in the World Cup giant slalom at Alta Badia in Italy yesterday. The 25-year-old skier had to handle a damaged, tricky course, defeat a world champion and hold off the strongest squad on the men's circuit — his Austria team-mates. Mayer recorded the fastest time in the first run and took all the risks in the second, down the steep Gran Risa course, to achieve the second World Cup victory in his career. His only previous triumph was in a giant slalom at Val d'Isère in 1993. Mayer beat the world giant slalom champion, Michael von Grünigen, of Switzerland, by 0.43 seconds as he led an impressive showing of Austrian skiers, who took seven of the top eight places. The

Austrians also swept the five top places in a World Cup downhill at Beaver Creek last month. Mayer was the last of 30 second-run starters, in reverse order of the first-heat finishers, and competed on a deteriorating course marred by bumps, holes and some parts of soft snow. He nearly missed a gate in the upper part of the track, made some acrobatics to make the next part and completed the race in the combined time of 2min 20.97sec. "I risked everything," he said. "I knew I could go out but I still pushed hard."

Von Grünigen, who had two wins in the three previous giant slaloms, came second in 2:21.40. The Austrian rising star, Hermann Maier, came third and strengthened his lead in the World Cup standings with a total of 489 points after ten races. "I never found the proper rhythm," he said. Alberto Tomba, of Italy, who had climbed to sixth place in the first run after starting as No 19, lost his balance, straddled a gate and fell midway through the second run. His failure disappointed the home crowd, dreaming of his first giant slalom victory since 1995. The losers yesterday, including Tomba, have a quick opportunity for revenge in the slalom at Madonna di Campiglio today, the last World Cup race before the Christmas holiday.



Mayer recording the fastest time on the first run before his acrobatics and daring on the second sealed his victory over Von Grünigen in the giant slalom yesterday

SNOW REPORTS

	Depth (cm)	Conditions	Runs to resort	Weather (Spm)	Last snow
ANDORRA Soldeu	35	75 good powder	good	fair	-4 21/12
		(Fresh snow all levels: good skiing)			
AUSTRIA Obertauern	80	120 good powder	good	cloud	-3 21/12
		(Great skiing but poor visibility)			
FRANCE Alpe d'Huez	70	140 good powder	good	cloud	-1 20/12
		(Superb skiing on all open runs: 40cm new snow)			
Avoriaz	70	85 good powder	good	fog	-2 21/12
		(Fresh snow throughout area: good fun skiing)			
Meribel	25	45 fair powder	fair	fair	-6 20/12
		(Varied conditions, some runs skiing well)			
Tignes	50	145 good powder	good	fine	-3 20/12
		(20cm fresh powder: great skiing)			
Val d'Isère	50	80 good powder	art	fair	-3 20/12
		(Fresh snow all levels, half available runs now open)			
Val Thorens	40	70 good powder	good	fair	-4 20/12
		(Some Tignes Vallee links now open)			
ITALY Livigno	85	140 good powder	good	snow	-3 21/12
		(Excellent skiing with new snowfall: outlook great)			
SWITZERLAND C Montana	15	80 good powder	closed	cloud	-1 20/12
		(Much improved conditions, 60cm at 2,200m)			
Klosters	30	100 good powder	good	snow	0 21/12
		(Fresh snow at all levels: good skiing)			
Mürren	30	50 good powder	good	snow	0 21/12
		(Excellent new snow, 10/12 lifts open)			
St. Moritz	50	250 good powder	closed	snow	0 21/12
		(Superb fresh snow: more lifts open soon)			

Source: Ski Club of Great Britain. L - lower slopes; U - upper; art - artificial.

Leeds look to reserves as booking tally rises



LEEDS UNITED 2
BOLTON WANDERERS 0
By Richard Hobson

IN A quiet corner outside the players' lounge, Robert Molenar spoke of the way Leeds United embrace the passing game. He explained how Eddie Gray, the coach, encouraged him to hone his skills in training. Such aesthetics seemed strangely out of place after such a joyless contest — but then Molenar was talking about the reserve side.

The "second team", as Molenar called them, sit atop the Pontin's League, rather confirming the feeling that Howard Wilkinson bequeathed to George Graham, his successor as manager, some of the country's most promising teenagers. For the present, the senior side is characterised by more prosaic qualities.

The fine goals by Ribeiro and Hasselbaink were out of context with the general mediocrity and tedium but they took Leeds' total for the season to 28, to equal the return for the entire 1996-97 campaign. Progress, indeed.

Just as pertinent is the statistic that Leeds have conceded more than 30 per cent more fouls than any other side in the Premiership. Bookings now total 46 after Robertson, Wetherall, Hasselbaink and Hopkin had their names taken here. Suspensions will soon begin to bite, for although Molenar proved an adequate replacement for Radebe in the cover in other areas remains largely untested.

Graham insisted again that Leeds are not a dirty side. "Many of the bookings were just silly," he said. This will become a familiar mantra. Three times in the first half players went eyeball-to-eyeball with their opponents and, while there was no suggestion of malice, then some challenges were belated to say the least. Fewer 50-50 situations would arise if Leeds passed more accurately, although Bolton Wanderers, who also had four players booked, were little tidier.

It is small wonder that Graham should describe himself as "delighted" after victory on Saturday ensured that Leeds reach the halfway stage of the season in fourth place in the FA Carling Premiership. "We are much higher than I expected. We are progressing nicely," Graham said.

Molenar added: "One of the basics of the game is to work hard and compete and if the ball is there to be won then make sure you win it. Any team that comes to Elland Road will try the same, but are they better at it than us? That is the question." The answer, emphatically, is "no".

To talk of the table offering a misleading impression so far into a season is, well, misleading. Equally, there are certain clubs where potential is more obviously unrealised, and Leeds are not one of those. "It is not realistic to think we can win the championship," Molenar said. "We have been lucky a few times and there will be games where that luck does not go with us."

Had Blake not directed a free header from eight yards so close to Marlyn in the 48th minute then Bolton might have left with at least a point. As it was, Ribeiro beat Ward from 30 yards with a thumping volley after 67 minutes and Hasselbaink, having turned Fairclough, curled a shot inside the far post with nine minutes remaining.

"Leeds are very physical, and why not?" Jamie Pollock, the Bolton midfielder player, said. "They are fourth in the league and they haven't got there without playing that type of game and working hard. I don't feel they overstepped the mark. They got stuck in and we got stuck in. There were some harsh challenges, but that's English football."

"We felt they had run out of ideas and then came the killer blow. But they are not in the same class as Manchester United and Chelsea yet. Teams coming here will think they have a chance." They will also leave having bruised.

LEEDS UNITED (4-4-2): N Marlyn — G Hala, D Wetherall, R Molenar, D Robertson — G Kelly, A Hazard, D Hopkin (sub: I. Bowyer, 78min), B Roberts — J Hasselbaink, R Wallace.

BOLTON WANDERERS (4-4-2): G Ward — G Bergstrom, C Fairclough, A Todd, J Phillips — M Johnson (sub: F Carr, 75), J Pollock, P Fenderson, S Salfers — P Beardsley, N Blake.

Referee: A White

Frenchman repays faith of his newly found best friend

Flamboyant Ginola imposes a luxury tax on Barnsley



TOTTENHAM HOTSPUR 3
BARNLEY 0
By Matt Dickinson

THERE are some things to which it appears impossible to remain dispassionate, which inspire loving and loathing in seemingly equal and extreme measure. The Spice Girls, the Teletubbies and Manchester United are undoubtedly three. David Ginola, without question, is another.

Gifted genius or lazy luxury? With Tottenham Hotspur's maverick star you pay your money and you take your choice, and Saturday provided more fuel for the debate summed up on *Match of the Day* recently, when Des Lynam claimed that he would pick 11 Ginolas and Alan Hansen, ever the sceptic, said he would not even bother with one.

That the Francophiles won this battle is beyond doubt, Ginola scoring two goals and orchestrating the victory that kept Tottenham off the foot of the FA Carling Premiership.

His detractors, however, will point to the moments of self-indulgence, the occasional theatrical dives and, as one wag put it, his attempt on the world backheel record in the final minutes, arguing that while this was a good day, the Spurs fans will have to suffer as many that are bad.

There are few doubters among the Tottenham supporters at present, however, and it is a faith that appears to be shared by the club's manager. Expected to be the first casualty of Christian Gross's spartan regime, even though he had been the club's best performer in the opening weeks of the season, Ginola has instead turned out to be the new coach's touchstone.

Like Faustino Asprilla and Kenny Dalglish at Newcastle, Ginola and Gross appear to have fallen for each other against all expectations, an attraction of opposites or maybe just a marriage of convenience.

Ginola, though, claimed that it is the real thing. "I saw that people were trying to put pressure on us from the start, saying that my way of training or feelings about football were different from him," he said. "But my relationship with Christian has been good from the beginning."

"With the training, it is just the



Leese is grim-faced after another bad day at the office, when Tottenham put three goals past him

same as most of the teams over Europe, from France to Spain to Italy. It is normal to spend a couple of afternoons and work on other aspects of your game. I am used to it.

"You have to realise that foot-

ball is my life. It gives me every-

thing else. I would not have the adverts on TV, say, if I was not a footballer first. I love the game, I love to win and I am always confident. The only moment when I'm not is when I am injured or away from the pitch. That is what I said to Christian before the

game. I went out and saw all the people in the stand, the ball and the grass and I said 'what a fantastic job it is that we do'."

It was a poetic response to match what had gone before, Ginola at the heart of everything that was good about this Spurs

victory. Alan Nielsen, inexplicably ignored by Gerry Francis for much of the time, came a close second for man of the game with his perpetual motion, but it was the Frenchman who, in his own inimitably arrogant way, caught the eye.

He was aided by a performance from Barnsley that, for the first half an hour at least, was as bad as anything they have produced this season. Yes, that bid. For the first goal after five minutes, the back three moved out with all the synchronicity of a group of office staff staggering from the firm's Christmas party, leaving Nielsen outside for a simple finish.

It was 2-0 after 12 minutes when Ginola's shot from the edge of the area crept under Leese's body, and those who had turned up hoping to revel in Spurs' misfortune were heading for the exits soon after, when Ginola scored his second with his head. It was a feat that, thanks to a pre-match bet, earned

'Football is my life, I love the game, what a fantastic job it is that we do'

him a bottle of vintage champagne from his manager.

It would be dangerous to draw long-term conclusions from either Tottenham's or Ginola's performance after a match when Barnsley were simply happy to lose by three. The pressing style that Gross is encouraging, with the likes of Fox, Ginola and Sinton told to defend from the front, is taking shape but it needs to be put to the test. Barnsley hardly even tried.

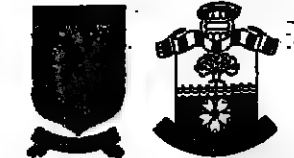
"We didn't deserve to take anything from the game," Danny Wilson, the Barnsley manager, said. "I've got to believe that we can stay up, but not playing like that. After three quick goals like that, obviously it is in the back of your mind you could get another big defeat, but I think Spurs took their foot off the pedal. They certainly didn't go for our jinxer like they did in the first half. But we shot ourselves in the foot."

TOTTENHAM HOTSPUR (4-4-2): I. Wetherall — S. Carr, S. Campbell, C. Coleman, C. Wilson — R. Fox, A. Nielsen, D. Anderson (sub: J. Dominguez, 70min), A. Sinton — D. Ginola (sub: S. Carrigan, 88), L. Ferdinand (sub: S. Vernon, 85).

BARNLEY (5-5-1): Leese — J. Sinton, P. Mackintosh (sub: M. Bullock, 48), A. Moss — N. Sinton, E. Taylor, N. Redmond, D. Brown, M. Spinks (sub: A. Ward, A. Lloyd (sub: G. Hinton, 67), Referee: M. Pook.

Lynne Tross, page 23

Chastened Villa lose their way in the fog



ASTON VILLA 1
SOUTHAMPTON 1
By Simon Wilde

ON THIS evidence, one can only hope that Aston Villa go on to win the Uefa Cup, because they are going nowhere in the FA Carling Premiership. Villa Park may be a fortress in Europe, and Savo Milosevic the man with the golden touch against foreign opposition, but domestically it is a different matter.

Southampton, who have an atrocious away record, showed themselves well-organised in defence, coolly confident and perfectly willing to try to kidnap all three points if the opportunities arose in a scrappy but eventful game.

David Jones, their manager, may not have been entirely serious when he called it an injustice that Matthew Le Tissier's late and swiftly taken free kick (clearly from the wrong place) was disallowed by David Elleray, but his protestations summed up his team's chumpish. With only an ounce or two of luck, they would have won.

Le Tissier was a constant problem to Villa, his skill and vision seemingly getting sharper the denser the swirling fog became in the last quarter. He was easily the most perceptive and inventive player on the field, throwing into stark contrast the performances of Stan Collymore and Milosevic, who had scored the decisive goal against Steaua Bucharest when Villa were last at home 11 days earlier.

Perhaps if this had been Atletico Madrid, Milosevic would have buried the three or four gift-wrapped chances that came his way, rather than apparently brooding about Villa's unreasonable threat (as he sees it) to keep him to the optional extra year in his contract.

He will rue his prodigality in not doing more with the under-10 back-pass from Lundekvam on to which he pounced in the tenth minute, or drilling home crosses he received, in space and close to goal, from Collymore and Charles. But at least he had the nous to take up positions he is paid to find; for most of the match, Collymore was nowhere to be seen, though this did not stop the crowd from seeking him out and giving vent to their displeasure.

Collymore's best, and virtually only, chance came shortly after half-time when the hard-working Charles located him on the edge of the Southampton penalty area, but his wild miscue over the bar was symptomatic of his recent misfortune.

Nevertheless, afterwards he professed himself to be as happy as at any stage of his career: if only people would stop criticising him, he seemed to imply, soon everything would be all right.

Both he and Milosevic would have given their right foot to have shown Taylor's adorably clinical finish in the 65th minute that gave Villa their short-lived lead. With a deft touch, Taylor took the pace off the busy Draper's drilled cross from the right before driving the ball past Paul Jones's left hand, all in three tidy steps.

Stanton, the man who set up Milosevic's goal against Steaua, also found fate treating him very differently. It was his mistake that allowed Southampton to draw level within eight minutes, when a hoof upfield by their goalkeeper misled him into back-pedalling furiously but futilely. The ball sailed over his head and into the grateful path of the unmarked Ostenstad, who had no trouble finding a way past Charles.

Stanton, too, brought down Palmer — who was at the heart of Southampton's strategy — with a desperate tackle from behind that led directly to Le Tissier's controversial free kick. "The referee said it was in the wrong place but he's only moved the ball about a yard," Jones said. "I did not see any of their players complaining."

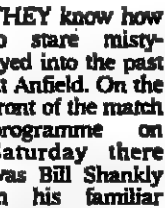
Though the referee's decision saved him from further mishap, Stanton left the field a chastened man. Perhaps God is an accountant who likes to balance his books promptly.

ASTON VILLA (3-5-2): M. Oakes — U. Etrique, G. Sedgwick, S. Stanton — A. Wright, I. Taylor, M. Draper, S. Grayson (sub: L. Harding, 67min), Charles — S. Milosevic, S. Collymore.

SOUTHAMPTON (4-5-1): P. Jones — J. Dodd, K. Marlow, K. Lundekvam — G. Palmer, M. Colley, S. Davis, K. Richardson, M. Le Tissier — K. Davies (sub: S. Oosterwijk, 88), D. Hirst.

Referee: D. Glynn

Liverpool toiling in Shankly's shadow



LIVERPOOL 1
COVENTRY CITY 0
By David Maddock

THEY know how to stare mistily into the past at Anfield. On the front of the match programme on Saturday there was Bill Shankly in his familiar messianic pose, reminding the club of its glorious

yesterdays. Liverpool's sponsors have commissioned a statue of the great man and placed it right outside the Kop. It is a long-overdue tribute, but its timing stinks. It is not the past that Liverpool need to ponder but the immediate future.

They need to win the championship, not just for their own sake but also for the sake of a healthy FA Carling Premiership, in which Manchester United are exerting a Sialist grip. Even Alex Ferguson would concede that his side needs authentic domestic competition, although Liverpool would hardly be his choice of rivals. It is not going to happen this season. Liverpool are a lovely side, oozing class and creativity, but they are simply not ruthless enough to brazen it out at the head of the league.

Shankly had one great maxim: that to win the title, his side must steal points they had no right to. Against Coventry City, Liverpool almost failed to win a match they should have stolen. Gordon Strachan, the Coventry manager, conceded that his side is a light-year behind Liverpool in terms of

quality, and yet at 1-0 down they were always in with a chance.

Liverpool have forgotten how to finish off weaker opposition and Roy Evans, the manager, hinted at his frustration. "We just got nervous," he said. "We played well for 20 minutes, and then... I don't know, I can't fault their attitude, but after that start I would have liked to have won it more easily."

They did start well enough. With McManaman yet again a threat on the right they created chances for Fowler and Redknapp before the latter produced a wonderful ball, matched by an equally intelligent cross from McManaman, that allowed Michael Owen the simplest of goals at the far post.

From then, Liverpool flowed forward sweetly without ever suggesting that they could emulate the efficiency of the teams of the past. That, now, is the preserve of their rivals from down the East Lancs Road.

If the present looks decidedly uninspiring, what about the future? That, in the form of Owen, appears a little more encouraging.

This young man has only just turned 18 and yet here is a footballer of implausible maturity. What can Glenn Hoddle, the England coach, have been thinking of when he criticised Owen for his



Owen, left, the Liverpool match-winner, takes on Nilsson

alleged waywardness on and off the field last week? Owen's conduct marks him out as a model professional. "I didn't see any difficulties from him on the pitch, I never have," Evans said.

Owen, though, is not yet the finished article, as fast as the bandwagon that is propelling him is travelling. He missed two chances, one in the first half and

one in the second, that should have been taken and his awareness is still limited. It may be childish to say so of a player so young, but it brings us neatly back to the present.

Robbie Fowler is Liverpool's present, and the club's supporters should remember it. Here is a young man who has scored 30 goals in each full season he has

played, and with the talent to guarantee that he will continue to produce such statistics. Who can match that? Not Owen — not yet.

Even so, the Liverpool supporters were highly critical of him during this match because he had, by his own standards, a poor game, missing perhaps two decent chances. What they should remember is that Fowler is negotiating a new contract and is sensitive enough to be influenced by such fickleness. Strachan recognises his talent. When asked about Owen, he preferred to dwell on the threat of Fowler and how his side nullified him. It was one of the few features of the game that pleased him.

"My players cannot hope to match Liverpool's quality, but they did not listen or take in what I said to them," Strachan said. "We are going home with regrets and that is the worst thing that can happen to a professional footballer. Give everything and get beat, sure, but never regret not having a go."

Coventry still had their moments. Hall volleyed over from close range and Beattie, who was making his first appearance, shot straight at James when well-placed. They did not deserve a draw, but the fact that they almost achieved it was as pertinent as the image of Shankly on the front of the programme.

LIVERPOOL (4-4-2): D. James — J. McSheehy, B.T. Heston, D. Marlow, S. Heston — S. McManaman, J. Campbell, J. Redknapp, O. Louchard — M. Owen, R. Fowler.

COVENTRY CITY (4-4-2): M. Hedman — R. Allen, R. Shaw, D. Dutton, M. Hall — P. Taylor, G. Beattie, Y.E. Solomov (sub: Owen Strachan, 80min), S. Wilson — S. Heston (sub: A. Dutton, 88), D. Huchard.

Referee: P. Alcock



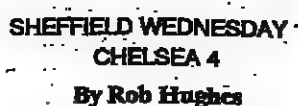
Top Gear

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Gullit brewing special Chelsea vintage



Vialli, the scorer of Chelsea's second goal, bursts between Newsome, left, and Nolan, the Sheffield Wednesday defenders. Photograph: Ross Kimmsd/Allsport

SHEFFIELD WEDNESDAY (4-4-2): K Pressman — I Nolen, J Newsome, D Walker, D Steatman — G Whittingham (sub: A Alexandersson, 50min), W Collins (sub: G Hyde, 56), P Rust, M Pembroke — P Di Canio (sub: B Carbone, 67), A Booth.

CHESHIRE (4-4-2): E de Goey — F Sinclair (sub: S Clarke, 75), M Duberry, P Laboulais, G Le Sauz — D Petraccu, D Wiese, R Di Matteo, M Nicholas — G Zola (sub: T A Flo, 67), G Vuill.

Derbyshire: G Barber.

.. Tomas, who was sent off for taking his protests too far.

Roy Hodgson, the Blackburn manager, was pleased with a performance that had grown in authority after a slow start. Missing the heading power of the suspended Chris Sutton, he selected

After 21 minutes Rio Ferdinand dealt with Duff by obstructing him; from the free kick, Sherwood's cross found Stuart Ripley unmarked to head his first goal for 44 months; no big defenders dominating there. Gallacher should have doubled the advantage with the last kick of the first half, but only five minutes into the second Injury's misplaced header presented the ball to Duff, who put on a score.

Against visitors who never looked as if they expected to avoid an eighth successive away defeat, Rovers had barely had to extend themselves to take a decisive lead, as Harry Redknapp, the West Ham manager, admitted. "Scandalous goals, terrible defending: Christmas, isn't it? I think I'm going to have to change the system. Away from home, when we haven't got the ball, it gives us

"It looked like a penalty," Hodgson admitted. "The players tell me it clearly wasn't and they don't normally lie directly to my face. On the bench you always fear the worst." The worst not forthcoming, Rovers threatened to run riot. McKinlay, in particular, would have richly deserved to see his 30-yard shot find the top corner of the net instead of the goalkeeper's fingertips, but Blackburn scored only once more. Duff

BLACKBURN ROVERS (4-4-1-1) T Flowers — J Kenna, S Hinchco, C Hendry, G Croft — S Ripley (sub G Fitzcort, 72min), W McKinlay, I Sherwood, J Wilcox — D Duff (sub: L Bohinen, 77) — K Gallacher (sub: J Beattie, 83)

WEST HAM UNITED (3-4-1-2) C Forreast — I Pearce, R Ferdinand, D Unsworth — A Impay, S Lomas, F Lampard, C Rowland — E Berkovic — J Hanson, J Kinson (sub: S Abou, 83).

WOLVES (3-4-1-2) J Hargreaves — J



Duff found the target twice in a splendid performance

Marion O'Neill, the Leicester manager, did not disagree, though he said: "I think Spencer Prior should have got there. Once a forward gets a touch on the ball, anything can happen." Gary Speed put away the penalty kick.

Howard Kendall, the Everton manager, was left, for once, with a assault on his face, while Leicester had egg on theirs.

"Cadamanters," Kendall said, "would cause most people problems with his pace. He's strong, he's burst on the scene, he's got tremendous talent and is a little bit

In the first couple of minutes Heskey looked as if he might win the game on his own. His header from Guppy's left-wing cross had Thomas Myhre, Everton's new Norwegian goalkeeper, diving to save. Almost at once, Heskey had a shot parried by Myhre, only for Fenton to shoot wide from the rebound.

LEICESTER CITY (3-5-2) K Keller — S Paoz, S Welsch, M Elliott — P Kozmarik (sub: S Wilson, 76min), M Izzet, M Lennorn, R Savage, S Guppy — E Heskley, G Penston (sub: S Clange, 46).

EVERTON (2-5-2) T Whyte — C Short, D Watson, C Tiller — E Banell, G Fennelly, J Ozer (sub: M Ball, 90), A Hinchcliffe — M Barnmy, D Codrington

Referee: J Wilson



PREDICTION: Arsenal win.

TELEVISION: Today: Live on Sky Sports 1, from 7pm.
PREDICTION: Arsenal win.

But in an age in which thousands of supporters try to recoup their outlay on real-life heroes by entering lucrative fantasy competitions, what would they give for a team that coupled Derby's destructive tendencies at home and the astonishing away-day stickability of Crystal Palace, whose defiance on Saturday in a seemingly hopeless cause was the stuff of legend? Crystal County (magician Jim Coppell) would have them quaking in their designer boots at the Stadium End.

So slovenly at Selhurst Park, where they have managed just five

Palace, though, were having none of it. Their contribution to the entertainment was strictly limited — although this was by no means the worst nil-nil draw of all time — and their backs were to the wall for so long that it always appeared that one more Derby shove would see the whole team collapse, but there was something vaguely heroic about their refusal to submit.

"Twonup up against Manchester United, 3-1 up at Bolton, 3-0 up at Leeds ... we would be top of the league if we could kill off teams," Jim Smith, the Derby manager, said. Some, like Palace, simply refuse to die.

GOALKEEPERS (3-4-3) M. Poonm ... G. Rowett, I. Stimpac, S. Elliott, S. Yates, 55mrs; S. Erano, I. Corsey, D. Powell, C. Powell ... P. Wenchop, F. Baralio, D. Burton (see P. Williams, 55); C. Alington, J. Smith, 52; K. Miller ... A. Probert ... C. Hargrave, J. Rodgers, H. Hennessey ... S. Burton, N. Emerton, S. Fiddler, D. Gordon ... J. Gohar ... B. Dyer, 55; P. Warhurst.

DEFENSE M. Stoddard

Graveney must quickly grasp captaincy nettle



Holoake: convincing

Adam Holoake may not be the solution to the long-term project of identifying an heir to the England Test-match captaincy. He may not even be a genuine Test-match player. But in remarkably short time he has demonstrated convincing leadership credentials in what must now be considered the separate game of one-day cricket. His future, and therefore that of Michael Atherton, must be immediately defined.

While Holoake was supervising England's desert specialists in the final of the Champions Trophy on Friday, Atherton was flying off on holiday, unsure of his role — if any — in future England one-day teams. As he remains captain of his country, at least in the cricket that matters most, this is a situation that must not be allowed to fester.

The sensible course of action, evidently already in the mind of David Graveney, the chairman of selectors, is the swift and decisive one. Now that the Sharjah party is home, Atherton should be contacted in Jamaica and told that he is in charge of the West Indies tour until the five Tests are complete. Command should then pass temporarily back to Holoake for the series of five one-day internationals. It is an unorthodox arrangement. Until recently, it would have been regarded as bizarre and unwelcome. That, however, was while England were labouring under the misapprehension that one-day cricket could be conducted with the same players and a similar approach to the five-day variety. This, combined with a shamefully inadequate preparation period and the obsolete

Alan Lee says there should be no delay in confirming roles for Adam Holoake and Michael Atherton

tactical notions of Raymond Illingworth, then team manager, helps to explain the lameness of England's cricket in the last World Cup. Holoake's accession, 18 months before the next competition, would be a serious mark of intent that things will be different this time round.

Certain points need stressing. England have not suddenly become yesterday's man, not even so far as the one-day team is concerned.

The three strongest one-day sides in the world — Sri Lanka, South Africa and Australia — have not played in Sharjah. England's opponents there have recently completed Test series, which can often be more of a handicap than playing after a rest period. As England have so often discovered, taking a party chosen for Test cricket, with its inherent fatigues and stresses, into an afterthought of a limited-overs event is usually a recipe for

failure. This is not to belittle the achievements of Holoake's party, which showed by its unity and vibrancy every indication of forming the nucleus of a competitive World Cup challenge. When England pick a specific team for one-day cricket and enter such an arena undisciplined of mind, they are pretty good at it. Witness their exemplary record in the Texaco Trophy, which traditionally launches the home international season, and specifically their 3-0 demolition of Australia in May.

Nobody was questioning Atherton's leadership then, much less his batting. In the second match, at the Oval, he played with uninhibited conviction to make 113 not out in a run-chase. He can be an effective, stabilising force in a one-day game and bridges

wherever his record or input at such level is doubted. Atherton deserves the right to challenge for a place in the one-day side. In the Caribbean and beyond, he has no wish to be among those dispatched home before the final fortnight of the tour and, ideally, no doubt, he would prefer to remain in charge. However, so long as the decision is taken and explained, he will accept the logic and momentum of Holoake's substitution.

It is more than simply a fresh face for a fresh challenge, more than mere cosmetics. Holoake has shown an empathy with the particular demands of one-day cricket, a flair and enthusiasm that Atherton, steeped in the more solemn and profound business of five days, has sometimes lacked. Properly and sensitively managed, two captains really can be better than one.



Atherton: effective

CRICKET

Stewart's example sets course for one-day achievers

By MICHAEL HENDERSON

ENGLAND could not have achieved much more than they did at the Champions Trophy in Sharjah. Though Adam Holoake, the captain, spoke freely of the mistakes they made, they won four games of competitive cricket against teams with more highly regarded players than their own and won them well. By any standards, the tournament was a triumph for the leader and the led.

It is possible to read too much into the result, so far as the forthcoming tour of West Indies is concerned, because Test cricket in the Caribbean is vastly different to a one-day shebang in the Arabian desert. It is possible, also, to read too little into it. England established a good team spirit and played winning cricket with a smile. Several players returned home with their reputations enhanced.

First among equals was Matthew Fleming, the Kent all-rounder, who was there only because Darren Gough was spending time at home with his family. Fleming's bowling helped to win the first game, against India, and his batting and bowling did much to beat West Indies in the final. Never for a moment did he look fazed by his introduction to international cricket.

Dougie Brown, of Warwickshire, was another successful first-timer. Right from the start, in the two warm-up matches in Lahore before the tournament, his mind was fully on the job in hand. Twice he took wickets in his first

over, he showed great determination with the bat and held a superb catch in the deep at an important stage of the Pakistan match. He seemed to enjoy everything about the tour, short as it was, and won an A rating from those around him.

There were other excellent performances. Mark Ealham bowled with relentless accuracy, never better than against Pakistan, when Saad Anwar took 16 runs from his second over. Far from being defeated by this fine batsman's aggression, the Kent man refused to give Pakistan another hit.

Graham Thorpe batted with good sense, putting down a firm anchor on two occasions for unbeaten half-centuries, and Holoake led the side with a relaxed determination, if such a description is acceptable. Perhaps Graeme Hick should have made more runs



Fleming: rose to challenge

over, he showed great determination with the bat and held a superb catch in the deep at an important stage of the Pakistan match. He seemed to enjoy everything about the tour, short as it was, and won an A rating from those around him.

There was a man of the tournament, though, and it was not Carl Hooper, for all his runs and wickets. If such an award means anything, then surely it means the man who contributed more than anybody else to his team winning it, and that chap was undoubtedly Alex Stewart, who, at the relatively advanced age of 34, is getting younger with the years.

As one of the two men absolutely certain of his place in both England sides, Thorpe being the other, Stewart faces a formidable task in the next couple of years. The fact that he keeps wicket and opens the batting, and keeps the team's engine ticking over with his enthusiasm, does nothing to diminish his role. But he never complains. He simply straps on his pads and does his best.

Stewart's hundred in the first game, against India, got England's tournament off to a flyer. He had a decisive hand later in that match, when he stumped Tendulkar, a pretty little dismissal to set beside his stumping of Brian Lara on Friday that was the sight of the week. When, years from now, he is snoring by the fireside, and wondering whatever became of all those players he used to know, he can remember that wonderful moment in Sharjah, and their faces will come back one by one.

In four matches Stewart conceded one bye, stood up to the medium-pacers, held catches, ran people out and effected those two essential stumpings. And he made runs, boldly, quickly and effectively. A year ago, when he was dropped by England, somebody wrote he was an international player in the past tense only. I am delighted to have been proved so thoroughly wrong.

One or two of these players may fall by the wayside but most will go all the way to the World Cup in June 1999. The Champions Trophy marks the beginning of that journey and, even at this distance, the view looks remarkably clear.



Edwards celebrates the stumping of Suresh Raina by the England wicketkeeper, Jani Cassar

Edwards puts Sri Lanka in spin

FROM THRASY PETROPOULOS IN CHANDIGARH

ENGLAND overwhelmed Sri Lanka by nine wickets in Chandigarh yesterday to book their passage through to the semi-finals of the women's World Cup.

There was never any doubt that England would defeat an inexperienced Sri Lanka side but, after their humbling at the hands of Australia in Nagpur last week, it was vital that they achieved victory here with a minimum of fuss and plenty of overs to spare.

England benefited enormously from Sri Lanka's decision to bat first on winning the toss: not only did Sri Lanka consign themselves to batting when the pitch was at its liveliest, but it gave the England bowlers the opportunity to bowl first for the first time on this tour.

One criticism of England in their earlier matches has been a lack of urgency in the field. Here, though, Clare Taylor and Melissa Reynard underlined that, in the right conditions, England possess effective bowlers.

Taylor is an experienced campaigner and, as the ball swung prodigiously in humid conditions, she reined in her attacking instincts and

sought merely to control the exaggerated movement. She was rewarded for her patience with the wickets of the openers in her second and sixth overs.

Reynard had Rasanelli Silva all at sea three times in successive balls, defeating the left-hander's forward prod in her opening over. After a streaky edge between wicketkeeper and slip, Silva's luck ran out as she edged to Jani Cassar, who stooped low to take a wonderful reflex catch at slip, giving Reynard the first of two wickets in a spell

that saw her concede only two runs in nine overs.

It was left to Charlotte Edwards to mop up the tail with her occasional leg breaks, although she was the first to admit that her haul of three wickets, all stumped, flattered her and was a reflection of Sri Lanka's inept batting. The only real concern for England was the inexcusable total of 26 wides in 43 overs shared among the bowlers.

A target of 105 was never likely to trouble England and Edwards was soon into her stride. Helen Plummer contributed only seven runs to a first-wicket partnership of 51, and as England closed in on victory, Edwards was doing with the bowling much as she pleased.

Her 57 not out took her aggregate in this World Cup to 340 runs off 338 balls at an average of 113.33, the only batsman being a duck against Australia. As ever, though, Edwards was unfazed by her achievements. "The seamers bowled well and they made it difficult early on, until I started knocking it about that is," she said. "Sri Lanka will be a good side in a few years."

Today, however, Sri Lanka are not a good side and though England could have done little more, they will know that a semi-final in Madras on Boxing Day, most probably against New Zealand, who play Ireland tomorrow, will be a different proposition.

India and South Africa battle it out today for the right to meet Australia, who defeated Holland in their quarter-final on Saturday. In the other semi-final in Guwahati on Wednesday,

MOHALI SCOREBOARD

SRI LANKA		ENGLAND	
V Rajeswari c Cornor b Taylor	1	C Edwards not out	57
M Fernando c Cassar b Taylor	7	J Plummer c Edwards b Edwards	34
R de Silva c Britton b Reynard	4	J Britton not out	34
V Bowen c Edwards b Cornor	38	Extras (b 7, w 10)	17
A Indrasiri not out	0	Total (1 wk, 22.1 overs)	108
R Fernando b Reynard	1	S Malcolm (K Shrineth, J Cassar, K Lang, M Reynard, C Cornor, L Macdonald and C Taylor did not bat)	
P Perera c Cassar b Edwards	7	FALL OF WICKET: 1-51	
G Gunathilaka not out	4	BOWLING: De Silva 7.1-1-21-0; Kanyemwema 4-1-18-0; Indrasiri 4-1-17-1; R Fernando 1-0-15-0; Shanethan 1-0-12-0; Gunathilaka 3-0-14-0.	
S Shanethan c Cassar b Edwards	4	Umpires: Jasbir Singh and N Seknam.	
T Ekanayake c Cassar b Edwards	2	OTHER MATCHES: Lucknow: Australia 224-4 (S Carter 74); Holland 108-6 (Australia won by 115 runs)	
Extras (b 3, w 28)	29		
Total (48.2 overs)	104		
FALL OF WICKETS: 1-27; 2-39; 3-48; 4-57; 5-67; 6-82; 7-81; 8-82.			
BOWLING: Taylor 10-5-17-2; Macdonald 5-0-15-0; Reynard 10-5-10-2; Cornor 7-2-11-1; Shrineth 5-0-19-0; Edwards 7-0-21-3.			

Klusener and Pollock serve notice for Test

SOUTH AFRICA'S pace bowlers scythed through Australia's lower order at the Gabba ground in Brisbane yesterday to provide their side with a timely confidence boost ahead of the first Test against Australia in Melbourne, starting on Boxing Day. Lance Klusener and Shaun Pollock took the last five wickets for 17 runs to dismiss the host country's second-string side for 330.

Klusener took five for 84 while Pollock finished with four for 68, giving South Africa a first-innings lead of 128 after he had declared at 458 for nine.

The visitors extended their advantage to 242 by the close on the third day, scoring 114 for three in their second innings. Bacher and Gary Kirsten, the openers, went cheaply, but Cullinan remained on 50 not out.

CYCLING

Elliott approaching the end of the road

By PETER BRYAN

MALCOLM ELLIOTT, one of only two men to win the Milk Race and the Kellogg's Tour, has also been one of Britain's most successful road riders abroad, especially in Spain and the United States.

Now, at the age of 36 and after the collapse of his team in the United States, the Sheffield rider is facing possible retirement — but it is not a decision he will take irrevocably.

"There's some truth in the rumour that I might retire but I haven't made a firm decision yet," he said yesterday. "There are a couple of leads I am following up and, until they are resolved one way or the other, I won't consider myself retired."

Elliott holds the Milk Race record for the number of stage victories (17) in the event that he won overall in 1987. He followed up with an outright win in the Kellogg's race a

year later and victory in the tour of Spain points competition, plus two stages, in 1988.

If next year is to be Elliott's last in competition, he would like to go out with a winning ride in the new nine-day Prutour, which ends in central London on May 31.

Graeme Obree, another former champion on the comeback trail to international competition, produced a fast turn of speed — for this time of the year — to win the Fullerton Wheelers ten-mile time-trial at Irvine yesterday.

Obree wanted "to sneak under" his own Scottish record of 19min 29sec, which he set last September, and was slightly disappointed with his time yesterday of 19min 46sec. He did, however, leave the rest of the field trailing in his wake by nearly three minutes.

Results, page 38

HOCKEY: ALDOUS AND McALLEN PROVE TOO STRONG FOR ASHFORD

Harleston achieve peak performance

By CATHY HARRIS

LIZZIE ALDOUS and Debbie McAllen each scored a brace to help Harleston Magpies to a 5-1 win against Ashford and into pole position in the East Super League. The victory enabled the former National League team to go into the Christmas break two points clear of St Albans, who have a match in hand.

Aldous and McAllen were each on target with first-half goals. Ashford hit back to reduce the deficit after the interval, but Harleston regained the initiative. Sharon Davies hammered in a penalty corner to put Harleston 3-1 ahead and, after McAllen drove home her second, Aldous converted a last-minute penalty corner to make it 5-1.

Sarah-Jane Sedgwick, the Severnside captain, netted her fortieth league goal, and her first for two seasons, when she hit a second-half winner in her team's 2-1 victory over Welwyn Garden City, who remain stranded at the bottom of the

table. Julie Evans gave Welwyn an early lead before Cathy Gilliat-Smith levelled the scores with a spectacular goal in the twentieth minute, her reverse-shot shot flying

past the startled Welwyn goalkeeper.

In the West, St Austell extended their run at the head of the table, moving four points clear of Exmouth after a

2-0 win at Exeter. Fran Ripley, the St Austell captain, referred to their opponents as "local rivals", even though the journey requires a round trip of nearly three hours.

The Cornish club has never finished better than fifth in the league and Ripley concedes that success this season is due to a combination of new signings and an excellent spirit, thanks to lengthy journeys spent travelling together to matches.

Newcomers, Linda Webb and Sam Buckingham, who has recently returned to the club after serving with the British Army in Bosnia, have quickly made their mark to form an effective partnership. Webb applied the finishing touch to give her side a 2-0 cushion in the second half, after a superb move with Heather Tusley. Tammy Messenger had set up Ripley to crack in the opening goal.

Results, page 38

ATHLETICS

Radcliffe loses out to Wami on final lap

By OUR SPORTS STAFF

PAULA RADCLIFFE prevented an Ethiopian clean sweep of the top five places in the first leg of the IAAF World Cross Challenge in Brussels yesterday, but the Briton could not prevent Gete Wami from winning the women's 50-kilometre race in 20min 45sec.

Wami and Radcliffe battled alone up front until the Ethiopian broke away on the final lap to win by three seconds. Radcliffe finished second, while Sally Barsosio, the pre-race favourite and the world 10,000-metre champion, from Kenya, came seventh.

James Moiben, a little-known Kenyan, won the men's race when he, too, pulled away with a lap to run. He was followed home by two other Kenyans, Thomas Nyariki and Paul Kosgei. Casen Jorgensen, the European champion, was fifth and Keith Cullen was the

first Briton home, in sixth place.

The Great Britain shot international, Judy Oakes and Mark Proctor, boosted their chances of competing in the European indoor championships in Valencia next year by achieving the qualifying standard at the Puma indoor meeting at Crystal Palace.

Oakes, 39, who holds the record for the number of British international vests, surpassed the 17.80-metre qualifying mark with a winning effort of 18.14m for Crofton.

Proctor, of Newham and Essex Beagles, looked even more convincing as he threw 20.18m with his opening attempt. His throw was not only better than the 18.90m qualifying standard but also broke the stadium record of 19.42m.

Pleasures and perils of recorded highlights

Whether it was a seasonal surfeit of late nights or Frank Warren telling Radio 4's 70-day programme that Naseem Hamed's latest bout was primarily about "introducing him to America", but for one reason or another I decided that the going-on at Madison Square Garden could carry on without me. Live, anyway — I would watch the highlights package, two showings of which the next morning were included in my pre-booked £9.95 package. I'd paid my money and now I was making my choice.

BSkyB admits it has little idea of how many people do the same each time a pay-per-view, fight-night comes along. Neither the technology nor the

research apparently exists to tell how many people who have pre-booked the bout watch it live at some outlandish hour or do the sensible but unexciting thing of watching a recording.

It might be worth the satellite channel finding out though, especially if the viewing patterns follow those experienced by Channel 5 last month, when it showed the Holyfield-Moorer contest. Some 225,000 watched it live, according to unaudited figures, despite a time difference that ensured it wasn't over until 6.30am. But at 9am, a well-scheduled recording secured an audience of 400,000. If that pattern was anything like repeated at Sky, there could be several implications

for the channel's highlights package, not least of which would be fielding studio guests a little more heavyweight and indeed familiar than John Thaxton and Richie Woodhall.

But at least Dominik Hoyer, taking over from a presumably exhausted Paul Dempsey, didn't hang about. A few pleasantries with his guests and it was straight over to Ian Darke and Glenn McCrory for the main event. For an extraordinarily long time this looked like consisting of Hamed silhouetted behind a white sheet.

Darke explained that Home Box Office (HBO), the American broadcaster, had insisted on the ring walk being cut from 20 minutes to ten, but as



MATTHEW BOND
TV ACTION REPLAY

the minutes passed and McCrory ran out of ways of saying "America has never seen anything like this before" you got the feeling that things were still not going entirely to plan. Hamed shadow-boxed, then he shadow-stimmed a bit and, after what seemed like ages, sensibly shadow-stood still. But eventually he pushed through the sheet (there were rumours that it should have burst into flames) and made

his way awkwardly down a steep ramp towards the ring. The artist formerly known as Prince (a brilliant line that Darke generously attributed to his American originator) had arrived.

The contest, of course, was terrific and the coverage wasn't bad either. HBO had some wonderfully accurate replays for between the rounds and Darke and McCrory showed that they are perfectly

well aware that at least as many people watch Hamed to see him lose as win. "It's an unpalatable truth, but at the moment Hamed is being outboxed," Darke said lasciviously in the second round.

Two rounds, a few interviews and a bit more chat with Messrs Thaxton and Woodhall later, the highlights went straight into Jones against McKinney, another great bout. It was after this that things began to go wrong, as Sky tried to salvage something from the wreckage of Friday night's card at the London Arena. You knew something was up when they didn't start with the top-of-the-bill bout between Robin Reid and Thulane Malunga, but with the horribly bloody encounter

between Mickey Cantwell and Eric Jamili. Not one to be watched over a late breakfast, it was an evening well beyond being rescued by the reliably honest Simon Reed and his co-commentator, Jim Watt. Sky, not a channel one associates with restraint, started its coverage of the Reid contest ... from the eighth round.

Recorded highlights are normally best when you don't know the result, but there are exceptions. Sky, for instance, reported a big, morning-after demand for the second Holyfield v Tyson bout once news spread of the famous ear-biting incident. Then there are highlights, such as *Grandstand's* coverage of the cricket final from Sharjah, when, as

Steve Rider pointed out, you probably know who won ... but three-quarters of the way through can't quite believe it. Perhaps it was all in the editing, but for most of the very welcome 50 minutes of highlights on Saturday it looked as if West Indies were certain to win. Cutaway shots to a sun-bathing Sally Gunnell and placards "improbably wishing us 'Happy Christmas'" there were plenty, but of Matthew Flenley's vital 33 runs there was almost no sign. By the end we had still managed to win but even Rider looked surprised. "A final which certainly had its tensions as far as England was concerned," And its eccentricities as far as broadcasting is concerned.

'He is simply not manly enough. Football people suspect him of reading novels and wearing scent'

Dashing Ginola wins his spurs

Star quality is a dodgy thing in sport. In other areas of mass entertainment, good looks and flair are generally regarded as a bonus. But, in sport, it causes a very obvious gender divide.

To take an extreme example, the advent of Andre Agassi in 1991 was greeted by astute female Wimbledon viewers as the most exciting event in tennis since the Danphun sent balls to King Henry V. "Come on, Andre!" they yelled. The fact that Agassi wore a shirt specially short to reveal six inches of matted tummy on follow-through seemed no reason to cast aspersions on his self-evident abilities in wielding a bat. But male aficionados, their judgments dazzled by a perceived sexual threat, would initially have none of it. They did what jealous men always do — they refused to be impressed and made lumpen-witted jokes about their adversary's name.

"Bah," they said. "Flashy crowd-pleaser... humbug... bring back Lendl... A gassy is right... fat man struggling to get out... pit pony... don't know what you see in him... not a serious sportsman... pigeon-toed... vacuous... oh my God he's in the quarter-finals."

I mention all this because a strangely reminiscent scene took place in the press room before Spurs v Barnsley on Saturday — a match in which David Ginola momentarily scored two goals. On a monitor in our cheerless antechamber was playing a video of a recent Tottenham club dinner at which a player-of-the-year award was presented to Sol Campbell. And every time a woman appeared on screen saying that her favourite player was David Ginola, the gathered scribes assumed a smirky, superior expression and laughed.

Now, I can see that Ginola has his drawbacks as a team player. He skips around the field singing

LYNNE TRUSS



"I Feel Pretty" from *West Side Story*, enshrined by his own personal spotlight; he disdains tackling; he adjusts his hair; and he is forever backheeling balls in an airy, read-my-mind manner to make wrong-footed team-mates look dim.

It's obvious that Campbell is a lot more use to Tottenham, that he is a genuine star player. Ginola is no all-rounder, by any means. Kenny Dalglish showed him the quick route out of Newcastle and Christian Gross isn't jumping around much, either. "This success was not the work of one man," the Tottenham manager said after their 3-0 victory. "Please can we talk about not just David Ginola." But, at the same time, it's not daft girliness to be impressed by him or to enjoy his star quality.

Tottenham know he's a crowd-pleaser, after all. They put him on the cover of the programme in a Santa hat. In the souvenir shop, the well-stuffed rack of signed player portraits had a noticeable



Ginola may skip around the field singing "I Feel Pretty" from *West Side Story*, but he undoubtedly has star quality. Photograph: Marc Aspland

gap where the Ginolas had sold out. "He's a star, isn't he?" I urged a colleague in the press box after Ginola had scored his two goals and the crowd was roaring his name. "He's got charisma." But it was no use.

"Mmm. He's a flair player," came the grudging, judicious reply. Had I held a gun to his head and said: "Say something nice about Ginola or say goodbye to Mister Brain," I truly believe that's the highest praise I could have got out of him.

Annoyingly, Ginola's excellent performance will change nobody's opinion of him. "Why couldn't you do that against Coventry or Chelsea, you long-haired wet girder?" is what they will say. And it's quite

true that "a great performance against Barnsley" is not destined for the tombstone. Watching Barnsley thrash about ("Help, help!") in the shallows of the FA Carling Premiership is emphatically not like watching Brazil.

On Saturday, they put up the sort of defence usually associated with puppies defending a slipper. Moreover, their goalkeeper, Lars Leese, had made the fundamental error (Lars, you fool) of coating his gloves with Vaseline. But it's not because he's unpredictable that they dismiss Ginola as a footballer. It's because he's French and namby-pamby. Leese is OK with the chaps because (though he

is similarly French) he is tough and bald and doesn't do adverts for knitwear.

"Wait till the cold weather comes," I was darkly warned last year when I was first charmed by Ginola's performances for Newcastle United. No, Ginola is simply not manly enough for people who know about football: they suspect him of reading novels and wearing scent.

He also registers pain when tackled in an unacceptably foreign, dying-bleeding-swan manner. This counts against him considerably. On Saturday, when a tackle brought his legs zadd-bodding to the ground, he waved operatically for succour — arm extended, hand limp, a graceful

arc of agony. He even managed to sit on the ball on his way down, a manoeuvre I have never witnessed in a felled footballer before. "Ouch!", "Ooh!" or even "Ahi!" might have been appropriate responses as Ginola sank so beautifully, but all he got from the press box, of course, was "Pah!"

Gross confessed that he'd used some cunning Swiss psychology on Ginola, offering him a bottle of champagne if he scored with a header. This challenge had been superbly met and it was nice to think of a manager scheming stick for carrot. But how weird to think that a Frenchman with lots of money doesn't buy his own champagne. Swiss psychology is in its infancy, I fear. "He's happy.

He's French," Gross shrugged when asked about it. (Note to Alan Sugar: tempt Gross up Premiership with promise of big cheese with holes in.)

I suppose, to be fair, I wouldn't like to rely on David Ginola to lift my team out of the relegation zone. Unfortunately, Ginola only looks truly comfortable when he's effortlessly outclassing everybody on the pitch, including his own team-mates. Perhaps it's time to do what Southampton did with Le Tissier: accept his limitations and celebrate his strengths. There are no crossed teeth and big bum to overlook in this case. Ginola is Le Tissier but with Brigitte Bardot thrown in. Surely there's something to be made of that?

SPORTS LETTERS

e-mail to: letters@the-times.co.uk

Skating should receive backing

From Mr Dennis L Bird

Sir, It is not strictly true to say (Sport in Brief, December 11) that 1998 "will be the first time that Great Britain has not had a full ice skating team at a Winter Olympics". In 1932 we sent only four girls; there were no men or pairs. And there have been other occasions (1952, for example) when we had no skater in the men's event.

As regards the present situation, I think it deplorable that the British Olympic Association should interfere when the International Skating Union has accepted that our top pair and dance couple are qualified to compete at Nagano. All four are good skaters who have spent years — and much of their money — training; they deserved their chance to compete in the Olympics.

Yours sincerely,
DENNIS L BIRD
(The Times skating correspondent, 1959-1978),
37 The Avenue, Shoreham by Sea,
West Sussex BN43 5GJ.

Referees' power

From Mr Phil Whittick

Sir, Danny Baker is absolutely right to rail against the number of players sent off by referees who are given "unassailable power" to control

Peterborough United and the strange art of patronage

From Mr Kevin Martin

Sir, As a Peterborough United supporter, depressingly far through what sometimes feels like a life sentence, can I express how completely underwhelmed I am by the notion (Home News, December 4) that the club, through its chairman, Peter Boizot, is about to become a patron of the arts?

I should think that the great majority of the 10,000 or so who sat with me, frozen to the marrow, through a derby the other evening are more likely to be sick as parrots than

league football matches. Every week we see players sent off for what appears to be no more than petty fouls and seemingly innocuous tackles. Of course players should be sent off in exceptional circumstances, like fighting and dangerous play (which are rare), but a sending-off should only be a last resort.

But we must not blame referees entirely. It is the Football Association who instruct these officials, and their casual approach to the sending-off of players simply demonstrates, once again, the arrogant approach of the game's administrators to the watching fans.

I look forward to the day when a supporter sues the FA, on whose behalf some petulant official has removed one or more of the star entertainers advertised to appear.

Yours sincerely,
PHIL WHITTICK,
19 Coed Pella Road, Colwyn Bay,
Conwy LL29 7BA.

over the moon that the equivalent of all the evening's receipts will end up with the RA.

Mr Boizot may have persuaded Mr Fry that this is an excellent idea, but there again, he pays his wages, not mine. As a club, we would be far more likely to stick our chests out with pride this season if we gained promotion. That would be more likely if Mr Boizot gave us the Monet.

Yours faithfully,
KEVIN MARTIN,
8 Taylors Close, Meppershall, Bedford, Beds SG17 5NH.

Claim to fame

From Mr Magnus K. Moodie

Sir, The Edinburgh Academy has had 91 of its former pupils selected to play international rugby, 87 for Scotland and four for England. Of these, one is female, Margaret McHardy, who played seven times for Scotland last year. Barry Stewart, who won the second of his two caps against Australia two years ago, is our latest male international.

Among our most distinguished alumni are "Hippo" Reid, one of the first superstars of world rugby, first capped in 1881, W.M.C. McEwan, who played for both Scotland and South Africa, "Phil" McPherson, who captained the 1924 Scotland grand slam team while at Oxford University, and the immortally famous Douglas Elliot.

When this subject came up for discussion at the club, we felt that perhaps there would not be a school

on mainland Britain that could rival us.

Yours sincerely,
MAGNUS K. MOODIE
(Press & Media Officer), Edinburgh
Academical Football Club,
47 Newhaven Main Street,
Edinburgh EH6 4HW.

Rugby too aggressive

From Mr John E. V. Rose

Sir, It is noticeable that the level of aggression in rugby union is increasing (Sports in Schools, December 5). Frequently in these circumstances, the referee is blamed for "losing control" of the game. Surely it is time that the coach and the captain took some responsibility for the actions of their own side and exercised the appropriate leadership?

Yours faithfully,
JOHN E. V. ROSE,
22 Nassau Road, Barnes, SW13 9QE.

Bookmakers cry wolf

From Mr Julian Williams

Sir, So here we go again. A leading horse owner has threatened to quit racing, the industry is pleading poverty and the bookmakers say that this has nothing to do with them.

The racing industry has been bleating on about its problems for so long now it is becoming tedious. How many other sports benefit significantly from one of the country's only hypothecated taxes? And who pays this levy? The bookmaker? Certainly not. It is the punter.

While racing goes cap in hand once again to HM Treasury for a cut in betting duty, the owners threaten to leave, the bookmakers respond, where is the punter's voice?

It is time that racing put its house in order and the Government said enough is enough. Abolishing the levy would be a good start. Racing should streamline the fixture list, halve the number of courses and encourage attendance. It is also time that the bookmakers stopped pretending that they fund racing. And it is finally time that the owners stopped threatening and actually acted.

Yours faithfully,
JULIAN WILLIAMS,
1 Chestnut Hill,
Eaton,
Norwich NR4 6NL.

This week in THE TIMES



■ **Tomorrow**
Have Arsenal been able to get their championship challenge back on track at Wimbledon?

■ **Christmas Eve**
Word games: win champagne in *The Times* jumbo sports crossword

■ **Boxing Day**
The day for greys at Kempton Park — Richard Dunwoody, above, compares the punters' favourites, Desert Orchid and One Man. Plus: recall the highs and lows of 1997 in the sports quiz of the year

■ **Saturday**
Reports and scores from all the Premiership football matches. Plus: Simon Barnes on a Kempton Park hero



By SIMON BARNES

MAGIC numbers and free champagne: what more could possibly be desired by anyone with sporting blood in the veins? Once again *The Times* is able to offer bottled bliss in the form of Nicolas Feuillatte champagne, to anyone who contributes a Magic Number this Christmas.

A Magic Number is one that carries immense sporting weight. Some numbers carry weight for all time, like Don Bradman's 99.94 or Torville and Dean's 6. But every year throws up new numbers.

I will judge the numbers for their champagne-worthiness and entries should be sent to me at:

Sports Department,
The Times,
1 Pennington Street,
London E1 9KN
or by fax to 0171 782 5211.

The final collection is to be published shortly after Christmas, so do it soon.

You do not have to be wealthy or a royal to take up carriage driving. Victoria Walker tries her hand



Clutch, brake, accelerator: Paddy walking in the paddock

'I could feel the G-force distorting my face'

Carriage driving has long seemed the preserve of the aristocratic elite. A century ago it was the preferred means of transport for wealthy landowners, and often the closest thing to a motor car that they could afford. But when they stood beside their masters' carriages on Boxing Day to accept Christmas gifts from the more generous, even today carriage driving is a sport that attracts many followers from the landed classes and the Royal Family. The Duke of Edinburgh is a keen driver, although he took it up only when he was in his fifties. He has won several medals, including three bronzes and a team gold for Britain in the 1980 world championships.

Carriage driving can be an expensive sport, but it doesn't have to be. A good pony can be bought for as little as £1,500, though a good horse can cost £5,000, and a champion ten times more. A general exercise vehicle can be bought for £250



Victoria Walker and her instructor David Wray: perched precariously on a two-seat gig, there is nothing between you and the engine (the horse) but your voice

and a harness set £200. But these figures can shoot sharply into the thousands if you want to invest in an antique showing vehicle.

An ideal way to give the family pony a fresh lease of life is to have it schooled in a carriage harness. With driving lessons it is possible to enjoy the sport without making too much financial commitment or initial outlay.

Many stables, such as David Wray's Northern Riding and Carriage Driving Centre, offer driving lessons that are tailored to the needs of students, whether they just want to enjoy the occasional drive or spend a week on intensive training.

The British Driving Society has a list of qualified instructors and can provide practical advice for anyone who wishes to take lessons or invest in a horse and carriage. It also has information on social and sporting activities, such as summer camps for young drivers, picnic drives and even

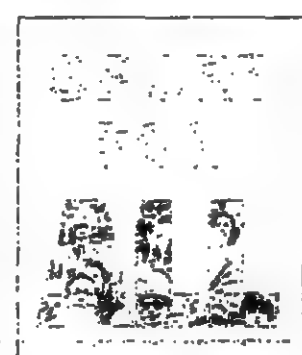
carriage driving holidays. The day-to-day care of horses is a drain on time and financial resources. "It is a 24-hour job," Wray, a carriage driver and horse breeder, says. "You can't just shut the stable door and forget about them." His advice to anyone interested in taking up the sport is: "Don't rush into it. Look around and get some sound advice."

I decided to sample the sport with a driving lesson in his carriage with his pony, Clutch, brake, accelerator — the mechanics of speeding up and slowing down on most vehicles is pretty straightforward. Even astride a horse, a leg

squeeze normally gets the message across. Perched precariously on a two-seat gig, there is nothing between you and the engine (the horse) but your voice.

The reins can be used to apply pressure to either side of the animal's mouth, which will turn its head and thus the required direction. But for starting and stopping, verbal commands are the only real source of power.

Unfortunately, Paddy, the horse connected to my carriage, understood only "Yorkshire". Employing the round vowels of my Southern upbringing, we remained stationary for my first attempts at



simple and I found myself wishing I had extra hands. "Sit up straight," Wray coached, conscious that in Private Driving competitions, image is everything. Whether at Wembley or the Burghley Horse Trials in Lincolnshire, or any of the nation's county shows, the competitors in the Private Driving classes are easy to spot. Highly polished brass gleams in even the dullest weather. Not a speck of dust, let alone divots of mud, will be found anywhere on the carriages, most of which are antique. The horses are groomed to perfection and their drivers and passengers

are equally well turned out with matching suits and travelling rugs.

A second category, Competition Driving, is far more grueling and (aside from dressage) a less balletic endeavour. Comparable to three-day eventing, it includes three disciplines, one of which is completed each day.

The first is dressage, which is a strict test of the driver's skill and the horse's grace. It contrasts dramatically with the cross-country section, where competitors race against the clock over a marathon obstacle course. Referees are seated on board each carriage as officials but they often find themselves acting as ballast, leaning out around bends to maintain balance, much like a yachtsman. The third test is cone driving. A ball is balanced atop each cone and points are deducted for any balls dislodged just like the penalties for dislodging fences in showjumping.

There is a lot to learn and even harnessing a single horse to a small gig can seem tremendously complicated — I shudder at the thought of

FACT FILE

- Northern Riding and Carriage Driving Centre. The Stables, Water Lane, Thornhill Road, Dewsbury, West Yorks WF12 9PY (01924 466240).
- British Driving Society, 27 Dugard Place, Barford, Warwickshire CV35 5DX (01926 624420).
- The British Horse Society, British Equestrian Centre, Stoneleigh, Kenilworth, Warwickshire CV8 2LR (01353 696077).

SHEEHAN on BRIDGE

By ROBERT SHEEHAN, BRIDGE CORRESPONDENT

Paul Soloway and Bobby Goldman, the former Dallas "Aces", play monthly challenge matches on OKBridge, the world's largest on-line bridge club, which at present boasts more than 10,000 subscribers spread over 60 countries. In this hand from their first match, against Mike Passell and Michael Seamon, Soloway (East) judged remarkably well, holding all five outstanding trumps, not to double Four Spades, the more so considering the opponents' tentative sequence to game.

Dealer West		North-South game		IMPs	
		♠ A864		♠ KJ883	
		♥ 762		♥ 109	
		♦ A7543		♦ KQ62	
		♣ J98		♣ Q8	
		♦ 108752		♦ Q10972	
				♥ A K 7 5	
				♠ 10	
				♠ A K 3	
W	N	E	S		
Goldman	Seamon	Soloway	Passell		
2N	Pass	3S	Pass	25	
All Pass				45	

Contract: Four Spades by South

Two Hearts was a weak two, not quite classical. Some aggressive players are willing to make these bids on five-card suits at favourable vulnerability in order to mix it up.

Declarer played the nine of clubs from dummy at trick one, and won East's queen with the ace. With no reason to suspect the 5-0 trump break, he continued with a spade to the ace, and the contract could no longer be made — one off.

There was a winning line at trick two, one which declarer might well have found had he

KEENE on CHESS

By RAYMOND KEENE, CHESS CORRESPONDENT

British success

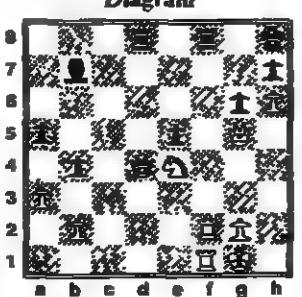
Nigel Short and Michael Adams have both advanced to the quarter-finals of the Fide championship in Groningen. Short's comeback against Beliavsky was particularly attractive, his final move in the following game being an unexpected thunderbolt which would have netted a vast material advantage.

White: Nigel Short
Black: Alexander Beliavsky
Fide world championship Groningen, December 1997

Roy Lopez	
1 e4	ie5
2 Nf3	Mc5
3 Bb5	a5
4 Bc4	Nf6
5 0-0	Bb7
6 Re1	b5
7 Bb3	d5
8 c3	0-0
9 h3	Rd6
10 d4	Bb7
11 Nbd2	Bb8
12 d5	Nb6
13 Nf1	Nbd7
14 Nf2	c6
15 dxc6	Bxc6
16 Bg5	Oc7
17 O3	Ob7
18 Ng3	d5
19 Ng4	dxc4
20 Of5	Mc5
21 Nc4	Rd6
22 Rd1	h5
23 Ne3	Nf4
24 Bc4	Ba4
25 Rd7	Bd5
26 Rb7	ed4
27 Rd7	Black resigns

Christmas cheer

For those of you who missed the Christmas competition on Saturday, here is the puzzle



Diagram

In the quarter-final at Groningen Short won his first game against Krasenkov. Michael Adams drew with Van Wely. Anand beat Shirov and Gelfand drew with Dreev. In the struggle to play Anatoly Karpov in the final, the UK is the only country with more than one representative left in the field. The last occasion on which two British grandmasters reached the quarter-final of the Fide world championship was in 1988.

□ Raymond Keene writes on chess Monday to Friday in Sport and in the Weekend section on Saturday.

WORD-WATCHING

By Philip Howard

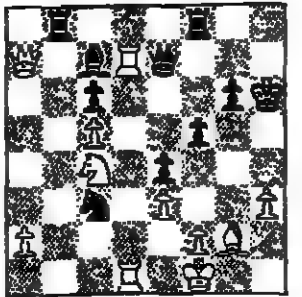
- YEDDO
- Tokyo
- A-board game
- Sun-dried fish
- SOAY
- A sheep
- A sauce
- A Buddhist prayer wheel
- TAZETTA
- A mullah's prayer cap
- A fragrant narcissus
- A marzipan croissant
- SILBO
- A whistling language
- Silver/borax compound
- A Finnish sled

Answers on page 46

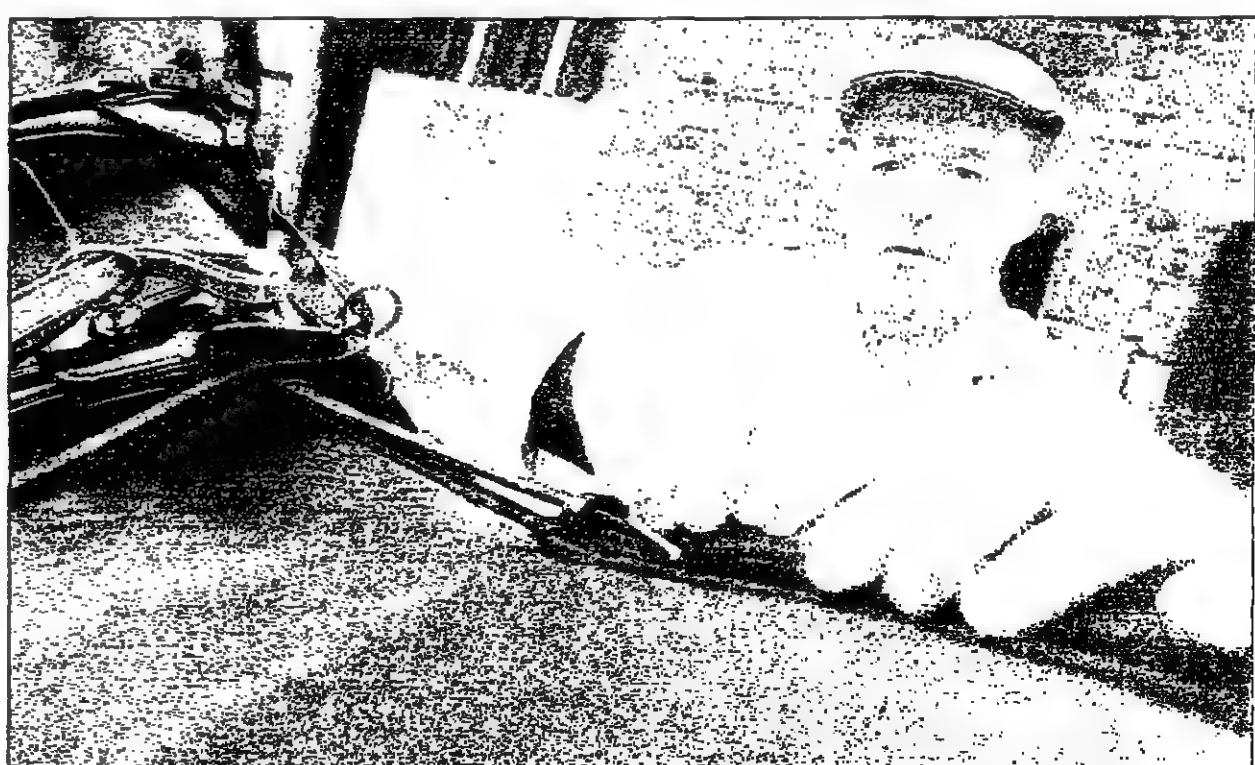
WINNING MOVE

By Raymond Keene

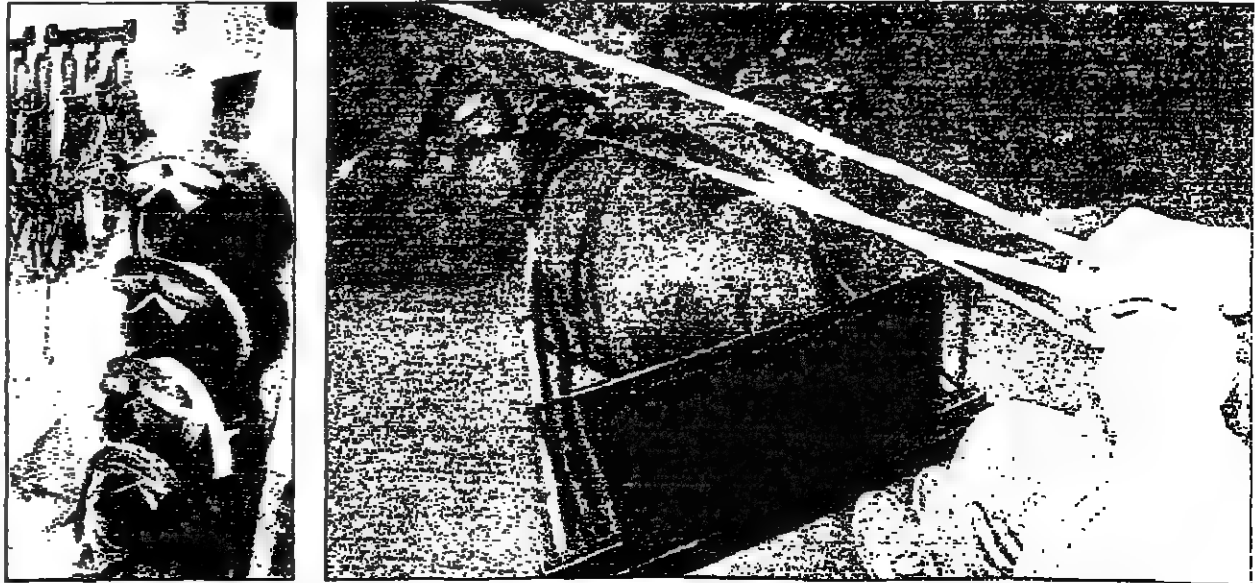
Black to play. This position is from the game — Maric — Arakhamia, Hastings 1995. The invasion of the white rook on the seventh rank looks like bad news for Black. How did he prove that this is not the case?



Solution on page 46



Tacking up to the beginner, even harnessing a single horse to a small gig can seem tremendously complicated



Horse sense: bridles in the tackroom, left; carriage drivers hold both reins in the left hand and the whip in the other

Seller's failure to fulfil ends contract

recognition of the claimants' entitlement to join an occupational pension scheme, of a national rule under which such entitlement, in the event of a successful claim, was limited to a period which started

How businessmen on both sides are helping the UN to bring about a united island. Michael Theodoulou presents a two-page report

Is sad Cyprus at last on a path to peace?

Greek and Turkish Cypriots face the new year with hope and foreboding, aware it will usher in the most critical period of Cyprus's history since the island was sundered along religious and ethnic lines nearly a quarter of a century ago.

The international community is set to launch its most determined effort to reunite the island under a federal system once February's Greek Cypriot presidential elections are over.

It is not difficult to see why, after years of stalemate, there is unprecedented interest from both sides of the Atlantic. For the first time, the convoluted Cyprus problem has an effective deadline: Cyprus is due to begin accession talks with the European Union at the beginning of April and no one is keen to usher in a country split by a Berlin-style wall. The hope is that settlement talks and the accession negotiations, which could drag on for years, will proceed in parallel.

Meanwhile, President Glafcos Clerides, the charismatic 78-year-old Greek Cypriot leader who is likely to win a second five-year term in the polls, attributes heightened American interest in a country half the size of New Jersey to Washington's belief that the heavily militarised island is not an "extinct volcano". Any eruption could well involve its feuding NATO allies, Greece and Turkey.

However, recent developments have increased the already daunting challenge facing the international community. Turkey, a key player with 35,000 troops stationed in northern Cyprus since it invaded in 1974, responded furiously this month when the EU again snubbed its long-standing



President Clerides likely to win a second five-year term

ing membership application while offering accession talks to Cyprus and all the former Warsaw pact members.

Ankara responded by rejecting further political dialogue with the EU and renewed its threat to integrate breakaway northern Cyprus. In turn, Rauf Denktas, the veteran Turkish Cypriot leader, declared the EU's decision meant an end to negotiations with the Greek Cypriots. "The intercommunal talks have died and, under these conditions a federation is not on the agenda," said a statement from his office.

Foreign diplomats in Nicosia take the threats seriously, but point out that Mr Denktas has called off talks in the past only to return to the table at Turkey's insistence. "No-one sees this as the end of the process," said one envoy, adding that the EU may have time to smooth ruffled Turkish feathers by February.

Optimism is a word shunned by international mediators, but some point to the growing contacts between the two communities as a sign of hope and evidence of a mutual

desire for a settlement. Get-togethers organised by the United Nations in the buffer zone that splits the island are enthusiastically attended.

In recent months, leading businessmen from both sides have been meeting regularly to build confidence between their estranged communities through economic co-operation. They have already achieved a breakthrough: the UN is now installing a system to allow telecommunications across the divide.

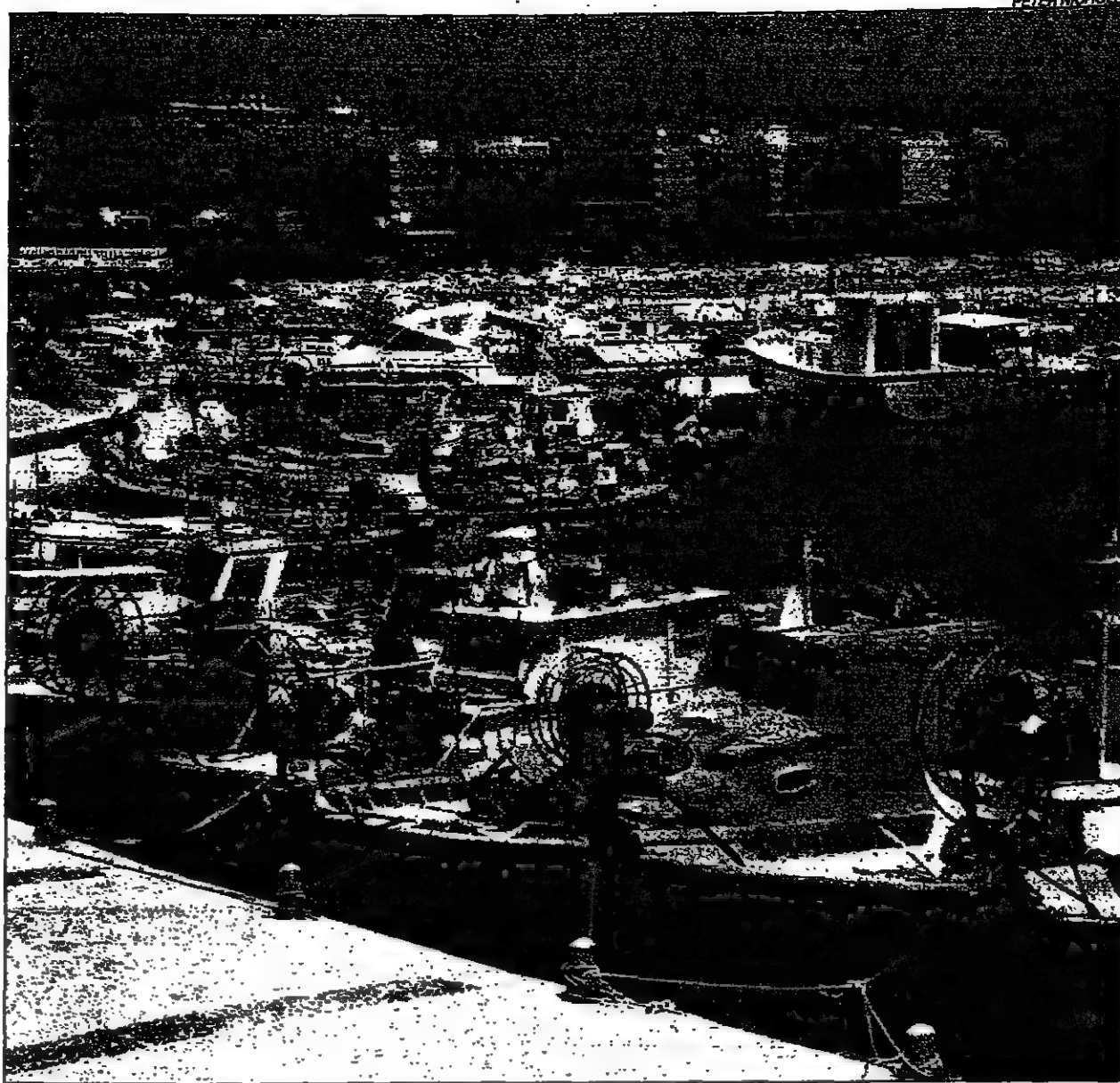
A bi-communal courier service is on the way, together with a language school for Greek Cypriots to learn Turkish and vice versa. There are proposals to co-operate on environmental issues, combating illegal drugs, controlling diseases and sharing water resources.

"The Cyprus problem has to be solved and everyone knows that — therefore it can be solved," says Constantinos Loidos, a Greek Cypriot businessman closely involved in the rapprochement efforts.

Ironically, Cyprus's EU application was meant to provide an "historic opportunity" to bring about a settlement by serving as a lever to prise concessions from both sides.

The application was made unilaterally by the internationally-recognised Greek Cypriot administration in 1990. They know entry will be very difficult without at least progress towards a settlement, although the EU has stopped short of saying it would be impossible for fear of giving Turkey an effective veto over Cyprus's application.

The unspoken warning to the Turkish Cypriots, whose economy has stagnated after years of international isolation, is that they could miss the EU train if the Greek Cypriots



The harbour at Ayia Napa: Greeks and Turks are to co-operate in sharing water resources and combating drug trafficking

board alone. However, Mr Denktas complains that Cyprus's EU application was made without the consent of his community whose interests he insists could be endangered by membership, especially with Greece in the club while Turkey, on which northern Cyprus relies for its security and financial survival, is excluded.

The EU is holding out the carrot of Turkish Cypriot participation in the membership negotiations, although Mr Denktas remains adamant Brussels must first recognise the legitimacy of his breakaway state and admit Turkey at the same time as Cyprus.

Against this complex political background, the interna-

tional community is also struggling to halt a full-blooded arms race. It gathered pace earlier this year when the Greek Cypriots, outnumbered and outgunned by the Turkish army in northern Cyprus, ordered a multi-million pound missile defence system from Russia which is due to arrive by next autumn.

Turkey, concerned its strategic superiority in the eastern Mediterranean would be challenged, has warned it will not allow the missiles to be deployed. Greece, which signed a joint defence pact with Cyprus four years ago, says any Turkish strike would mean war.

Some diplomats doubt the missiles will ever arrive. Privately, some Greek Cypriots officials concede the primary aim of ordering them was not so much to boost defences but to galvanise the international community into taking the Cyprus problem more seriously. If there were progress towards a solution, delivery of the missiles would be cancelled, Mr Clerides has promised.

Each side has long accepted proposals to reunite the island under a bi-zonal federation, in which the Turkish Cypriots, who are one in five of the population but control 37 per cent of the territory, would return some land, but retain a majority in the area under

their control. However the exact nature of that federation and such key issues as sovereignty, territory, security guarantees and the return of refugees have led to deadlock.

"The sad truth is that in Cyprus there is a lack of confidence in the good faith of the other side which undermines efforts to reach agreement," says Sir David Hannay, Britain's diplomatic big gun on Cyprus.

On the Greek Cypriot side there is a belief that the basic Turkish Cypriot objective is secession and an entirely separate state. The Turkish Cypriot side believes that the basic Greek Cypriot objective is domination of the institutions of the new republic.

Security a lure to foreign business

The languages spoken on the tennis courts and around the swimming pools of Cyprus's five-star hotels in Nicosia and Limassol provide a brief history of the island's booming offshore sector.

In the 1970s and 1980s Arabic was commonly heard. Lebanon's civil war had given the offshore sector its first big break. Serbo-Croat crept in after the collapse of Yugoslavia but has since been swamped by Russian.

More than 28,000 offshore companies, including 32 banks, have registered in Cyprus since about 1,200 of them with established offices. Recent years have seen a huge increase in the number of companies established by Russians and other businessmen from the former Eastern bloc. But there remains a strong representation of Western firms such as Coca-Cola and AT&T, who use Cyprus as a base for the Middle East and North Africa.

The island's political and economic stability in a volatile region has been one of its strongest assets. Other attractions include a well-educated workforce, first-rate telecommunications and a British-based legal system, but the biggest incentive remains the flat rate of tax of 4.25 per cent on net taxable profit.

Many Russians worried by crime at home are pleased to discover a safe base for their families that also offers a well-regulated first step into the Western business world. Their way is eased by cultural and Orthodox religious ties.

A significant number of Cypriots are fluent Russian speakers, a legacy of the close ties between the island's Communist Party and Moscow, which enabled many poorer students to win scholarships to study in the Eastern bloc.

The traffic is two-way, with many Western companies using Cyprus as a springboard into Russia and Eastern Europe. Large American and Canadian oil services companies opening in Siberia have set up bases.

Last month Credit Suisse First Boston, the multinational banking giant, reportedly booked \$6.6 billion of its investments in Russia through its recently established offshore bank in Cyprus, leading to gleeful predictions in the local press that more first-rate international banks would follow suit and establish a presence here.

Ship management companies are among the biggest in the offshore sector, with most based in Limassol. "Cyprus is now attracting shipping people, not just because of low taxes, but because it has become a leading maritime centre," says Norman Elliott, the president of an association representing the offshore community.

With a fifth of the world's ships flying the Cyprus flag, the authorities have had difficulty keeping up with the fleet's expansion. Smarting from its tag as a "flag of convenience", and under pressure to meet European Union standards, they are trying to improve safety by placing Cypriot ship inspectors in some 40 ports around the world.

Understandably, the Government is determined that EU entry does not erode the attractions of its low-tax offshore regime. "The Finance Minister is aggressively positive about protecting the offshore community in the forthcoming EU negotiations," says Mr Elliott.

Proof of that commitment came in January when the Government renewed the 4.25 per cent offshore tax ceiling for another ten years. According to the Finance Minister, Christodoulos Christodoulou, there are also advantages for the EU in Cyprus retaining its offshore sector. "Europe itself will have a lot to benefit by using Cyprus as a starting block and a bridge to the Middle East," he says.

Growth paves the way for entry into the club

Designer-clad young accountants and lawyers relax in open-air street cafes, their gleaming Jeeps and BMWs mounted on the kerb. Bejewelled and well-coiffed women chat into mobile phones as they browse in boutiques that sell expensive European fashions.

Stroll through central Nicosia or Limassol and Greek Cyprus's prosperity is on proud display. In just a generation, what was a colonial backwater dependent on agriculture has changed into a booming tourist destination, that is also fast becoming a regional financial hub. Cyprus already meets most of the five Maastricht treaty convergence criteria for monetary union with the European Union.

Per capita gross domestic product is nearly \$13,000 (£8,000), which is far higher than any of the Eastern European countries also earmarked for EU membership talks. Inflation stands at just over 3 per cent. The fiscal deficit has climbed, probably as a result of increased defence spending, but as a percentage of the GDP is about 4 per cent.

The boom years that saw annual growth rates topping 5 per cent may now be over, but a provisional 2.5 per cent growth rate for this year is still in line with the EU average, and a 4.5 per cent growth rate is forecast for 1998. Perhaps most crucially for a country clamouring to enter the EU, Cyprus is considered to have full employment.

"Cyprus certainly would not be a burden to the Community budget and could even be a net contributor," says Constantinos Mavrantonis, an economic adviser with the European Commission delegation in Nicosia.

There are sound economic reasons why Greek Cypriots should want to join the EU, which absorbs about 50 per cent of their exports and accounts for 55 per cent of their imports. But their motivation is overwhelmingly political. They believe entry could help re-unite the island, or at least provide a guarantee against further Turkish expansion.

Yet because Cyprus remains divided, they realise their application presents political problems for Brussels that those of the Eastern European applicants do not. For that



Greek Cyprus: a colonial backwater once dependent on agriculture has changed into a booming tourist destination

reason the Greek Cypriot authorities are keen to ensure there are few reservations about the economy.

More than 20 teams have been allocated to harmonise legislation with the EU. The Central Bank adopted a series of financial sector reforms in 1996, although economists say more must be done to liberalise interest rates and the movement of capital for inward and outward investment. The initial target of the task force is to harmonise up to 80 per cent of Cypriot legislation by 2000.

Less enthusiastic about the EU challenge are those involved in traditionally protected and labour-intensive industries such as clothing and footwear, where rising wages and small units have made their products less competitive.

"The way ahead for the manufacturing sector is to go for quality, innovation and enter partnerships with European companies," says Mr Mavrantonis. Economists say

there are good prospects for chemicals and food processing.

The once important agricultural sector, whose contribution to the GDP has shrunk to less than 10 per cent, is expected to do well from EU entry because domestic support to farmers in Europe is higher than in Cyprus.

Farmers who grow citrus fruits, potatoes, table grapes and vegetables, the main agricultural exports, are expected to benefit most.

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Whether visiting the island for holidays or planning on setting up home there, Cyprus has much to offer, says Michael Theodoulou

TOURISM

Fickle and often wanton they may be, but the gods on Olympus seem to look kindly on Cyprus's tourism industry, the mainstay of the economy. The doomsayers are usually proved wrong, the dips rarely last.

This year proves the point. It started badly after a brief outbreak of violence along the island's dividing Green Line the summer before. Then the Greek Cypriots ordered a multimillion dollar air defence system from Russia. Turkey threatened to destroy the weapons if they were ever deployed.

For many Greek Cypriots, these alarming headlines served a useful purpose. They reminded the international community that the island was forcibly divided, heavily militarised and desperately in need of a solution. Rising tension galvanised interest from both sides of the Atlantic.

At the same time, the tourism authorities were counting the cost of such bad publicity. They insisted, justifiably, that the resort areas were well away from the tense United Nations-patrolled buffer zone and that Cyprus is so relatively crime-free that only the paranoid bother to lock their cars.

In the end, the year passed peacefully and, with the Americans launching a long-awaited initiative to reunite the island, the news headlines from Cyprus improved. So, after initial predictions of a 5 per cent fall in tourism, 1997 is set instead for a 5 per cent rise. Tourism revenues are expected to reach C£830 million (£96 million sterling), up C£20 million on the previous record.

Of the two million arrivals 770,000 were from Britain — which has long dominated the tourism market — 50,000 more than last year, thanks mainly to sterling's 20 per cent increase against the Cyprus pound in the past 12 months. Hoteliers also offered good rates to tour operators.

Using expensive advertising campaigns, Cyprus is aggressively chasing other markets. Arrivals from Russia increased by a third to 150,000 this year, with many hotels now offering borsch on the menu and *lavash* in their bookshops.

"They're big spenders, big drinkers and big tipsters," enthused a public relations assistant at a four-star hotel in Limassol, the Russians' favourite resort on the island. Bookings are also up from Israel, with many taking advantage of the short trip for a long weekend away from the tensions at home.

Military "tension" aside, the



On the tourist trail: Paphos has Roman mosaics and fine Byzantine churches. Left, The Tombs of the Kings from the 3rd century BC, and, right, the theatre overlooking the sea at Kourion

A treasure chest of the ancient and the modern

Cyprus Tourism Organisation (CTO) has long been concerned that overdevelopment of the coastline may kill the goose that lays the golden eggs. It has for years hankered after what it calls the "high quality" tourist, one that behaves himself, spends a lot and is environmentally conscious.

There are restrictions on building hotels, but with some two million tourists a year — three times the Greek Cypriot population — some already argue Cyprus has become a mass-market destination.

Nevertheless, Cyprus has learnt from the mistakes of the past, which in any case were understandable considering the rush to build after the loss of the biggest resorts such as Famagusta after the

1974 invasion by Turkish forces.

The CTO is promoting agrotourism for those not content to broil on the beach. Villages run down from years of rural depopulation are being attractively restored to bring in visitors who want to sample the old Cyprus, from basic but tasty village cooking to earthy farm smells and the braying of donkeys.

A few days in the picturesque, higgledy-piggledy villages in the pine-clad Troodos mountains are also recommended. Towns such as Pafos, home to the lovely Forest Park Hotel and its chorus of nightingales, were the favourite summer haunts of British colonial

officials, keen to escape furnace-like lowlands in July and August.

The advent of air-conditioning in the 1950s boosted the beach resorts and saved these mountain villages, where monasteries are more common than hotels, from despoliation.

On the coast, Paphos has a treasure trove of Roman mosaics and fine, Byzantine churches. It is a short drive from the Akamas peninsula, one of the Mediterranean's last unspoiled forests, whose spectacular coastline features cliffs that plunge hundreds of feet into the turquoise sea, limestone caves, virgin lagoons, rock beaches and sandy coves that are breeding grounds for rare turtles.

There is a national plan to market Cyprus as a golfing destination. And nautical tourism is being boosted with plans for marinas in Paphos and the eastern resorts of Paralimni and Ayia Napa.

The latter is a bustling, neon-lit party town popular with younger visitors and recently home to Waterworld, a Disney-style park of high adrenalin water slides and rides with Greek mythology as its theme.

It may be rather tacky, but it seems to have pleased the gods.

PROPERTY

For the Ancient Brits, as the several thousand retirees from the former colonial master are often called, Cyprus is a home from home. For many, the day begins as it would in drizzly Clapham, listening to John Humphrys or Anna Ford grilling a politician. But the *Today* programme, which is available on British Forces Radio, starts here at the more civilised hour of 8.30am.

By 11.15am, just as they settle down to their first gin and tonic on the veranda, it is time for *The Archers*. Those beyond the reach of Forces Radio make do with the BBC World Service.

The British papers arrive a day late, although many now get them from the Internet. Sky Sports is available on satellite. Cypriots know how to brew a decent cup of tea, most speak English, many are Anglophiles and motorists drive on the left.

And with Britain just a four-hour flight away, the island is a magnet for family members taking advantage of the accommodation provided by those with retirement or holiday homes.

"I know many couples here who see more of their children and grandchildren than they would back in Britain," says Dolores Savvides, a retirement expert based in Limassol. "They see their homes as a great place to entertain their families. It's a place where people are able to lead a full and interesting life at modest cost in a warm and healthy climate." In recent years, she adds, better golfing facilities have proved another major attraction.

Lifestyle considerations apart, there are also substantial fiscal incentives. British pensions received in Cyprus are liable for income tax at a nominal rate of 5 per cent with the first £2,400 exempt. Those receiving investment income from abroad are only taxed on money brought to Cyprus, so unremitted assets located in an offshore tax haven are not taxed in Cyprus.

Now is a good time to buy property, say local estate agents. Reduced demand in recent years has made prices fall by about 15 per cent in resorts such as Paphos, which is the most popular with British retirees. This has been compounded by sterling's strength, which means the real cost of a house for a British buyer is probably 30 per cent lower than it was two years ago.

In Paphos you can get a detached three-bedroom bungalow with a sea view, swimming

Pensioners stay wealthy and healthy



Coral Bay, Paphos: fancy a laze in the sun, a swim or a round of golf?

pool and large garden for about £120,000," says Antony Loizou, a leading chartered surveyor.

Unlike most estate agents, Ms Savvides says Britons should not buy homes here with a view to investment. Many, keen to return to Britain after a partner suddenly dies, sell their homes quickly and realise little capital gain.

"You probably won't lose money, but don't expect a great

gain. Moving here is more to do with lifestyle," she says. However, she agrees that when Cyprus does eventually join the European Union, property prices are expected to rise sharply.

Foreigners are not allowed to own more than one house or flat. Some bureaucracy is also involved, although this is intended to protect the buyer. Any good lawyer or estate agent can smooth the way.

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CYPRUS

The year of the bull or the mouse



ROGER BOOTLE

Investors will surely recognise 1997 as the year of the bull (provided that they were not too heavily invested in the Far East) and, noting the importance of the beef issue, politicians of all parties might well concur — albeit for rather different reasons. Yet for the man from Mars it has surely been the year of the mouse.

On the face of it, the election of a Labour Government after 18 years of the Tories is a shattering change in the economic firmament. Yet when you look at what they have done, you can hardly see the joins. True, Labour has raised taxes — marginally. But it has not delivered the blitz on the incomes of high earners that many previous sufferers feared. The much-heralded windfall tax on the privatised utilities came and went without much fuss. The most striking tax measure has been the abolition of tax credits on dividends — though this continues a move first made by the Conservatives. Likewise, the erosion of mortgage interest tax relief

and the increases in excise duties. On broader economic themes, it has also been more of the same. Fears of renationalisation? Forget it. The new Government will probably privatise even more. Meanwhile, the new Labour policy of charging university students tuition fees looks as though it comes straight out of the Thatcher handbook, while the subjects of single mothers, welfare reform and the work ethic make the Prime Minister sound like a caring version of Norman Tebbit.

On the treacherous ground of our relations with Europe, the Government has tried hard to strike a fresh pose, but the stark reality of Britain's European predicament, which is no respecter of party political boundaries, keeps breaking through. After weeks of disastrous spin-doctoring on the subject of EMU during the sum-

mer, the Government finally produced an excellent document outlining five tests to determine whether Britain was ready to join EMU. But this amounted to an elegant and well-argued reformulation of the hoary doctrine that we should only join "when the time is ripe" or, putting it another way, "Major was right after all".

There are two distinctive economic policies but they have yet to be tested. Evidently, the introduction of the minimum wage is going to be much trickier than its advocates envisaged. The jury is out on Welfare to Work, although it is already clear that the vigorous economic recovery is doing more for jobs than any of the Government's prospective sticks and carrots ever could. There has been one momentous measure, namely the decision to give the Bank of England independent control of

interest rates. Even this, though, represents a further evolution of the approach taken by the Conservatives since 1992.

The lack of sharp policy change has been reflected in financial markets. At the beginning of the year, private investors' concerns about the future centred on the prospective election. Shouldn't

they be selling their shares/gilts/property/the pound sterling before the impending collapse? No, I said. You are not the only ones to have noticed that we are likely to have a Labour government and the markets will already have priced in the very same fears which trouble you. Moreover, these fears are likely to be unjustified, in which case asset prices will rise.

It tempts the gods to say this, but so it has proved. The FTSE index of share prices began the year at just over 4,100. On election day four months later it stood at 4,445. Since then it has climbed above 5,200 and, even after Friday's weakness, still stands above 5,000. Ten-year gilt yields began the year at 7½ per cent and fell to just over 7 per cent by election day. Today they are down to 6½ per cent. Having begun the year at just over 260 against the mark-

and risen to 279 by election day, the pound now trades close to 2.95. Property prices, both residential and commercial, have continued to rise all year. So much for the Labour bear market.

For all that, 1997 has seen two economic developments that will have a major influence on our future, though neither has anything to do with the change of Government. Back in January, there seemed to be a good chance that EMU would be postponed, and there were indeed several wobbles along the road to the euro. But we have all had to come to terms with the idea that EMU is probably going to start on time.

The second major change is the gathering storm in the East, which threatens to darken the economic skies here also. At the beginning of the year, commercial companies and investment managers

would boast about the extent of their involvement in Asian markets. Recently, it has become fashionable for the same people to try to give reassurance by saying how small their involvement is — a change of posture which they may live to regret.

Partly because of such external developments, the talk of a runaway British boom which was so common in the first half of the year, has given way to talk of sharp slowdown. Elsewhere in the world, the danger of rampant inflation has been replaced by worry about deflation.

It is these factors, and not something over which the Chancellor has direct control, which are likely to determine how British asset prices behave over the year ahead. As regards my views, by now you should know the score. The bull markets in shares, houses and the pound are drawing to a close. By contrast, the gilt market's love affair with the Labour Government has only just begun.

Scotia shares set to fall after key drug is rejected

BY MARTIN BARROW

SHARES of Scotia Holdings are expected to fall heavily after UK health authorities rejected the biotechnology company's appeal for approval of one of its most important drugs.

The Medicines Control Agency has turned down Scotia's appeal for approval of its drug Tarabatic for treatment of diabetic neuropathy, the nerve damage suffered by diabetics.



Horrobin: abrupt departure

The regulatory setback was announced late on Friday after the formal stock market close. But already Scotia shares had fallen 27½p to 317½p, and analysts expect Scotia's beleaguered investors to sell heavily again today.

Scotia, based in Stirling, was formerly one of Britain's most promising biotechnology companies and enjoyed a high stock market rating. But it has suffered a series of setbacks this year, including in the abrupt departure of David

Horrobin, the founder, as chief executive earlier this month. Sherri Clarkson, his wife and head of the drug discovery division, also left the company.

The MCA, which advises the Health Minister, originally said in March that it was unable to approve Tarabatic, a drug based on evening prim-

rose oil, because of variations in its performance in different trial centres.

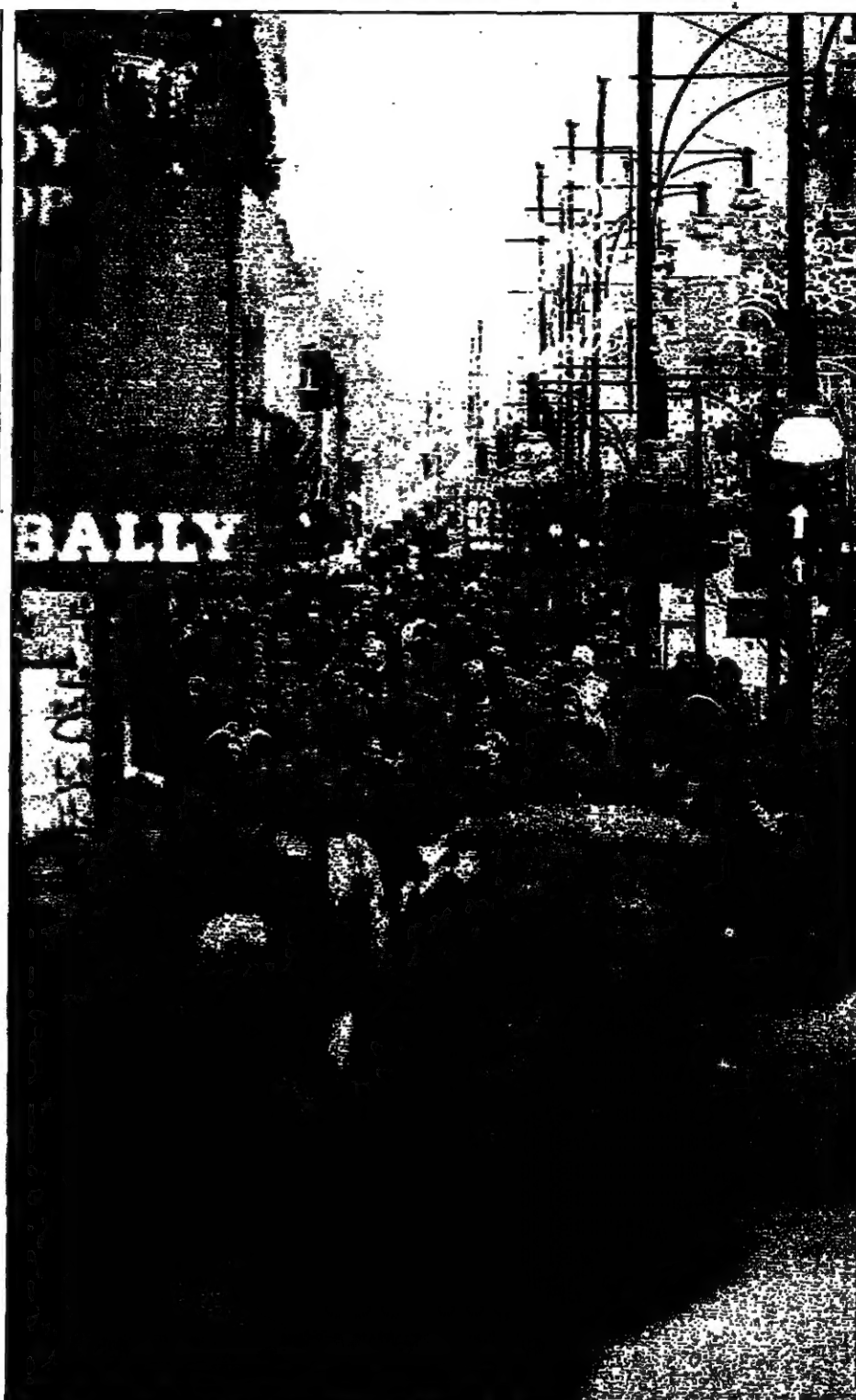
The original rejection clipped 24 per cent off the company's stock market value. It undermined shares in other biotechnology companies, notably British Biotech and Celltech.

Scotia's patent on Tarabatic expires in one year and the company now sees no value in pursuing approval any further. Lehman Brothers, the stockbroker, had forecast annual sales of almost £90 million.

The company is now pinning its hopes on a second generation of diabetes drugs, including a new compound for diabetic impotence being developed with Germany's Astra Medica. There is also interest in Scotia's new appetite suppressing product, an ideal break emulsion based on natural oils, which reduces the desire for food and could prove a big hit with dieters. But there is likely to be concern in the City about Scotia's ability to fund this development after the Tarabatic setback.

Scotia investors had high hopes for the company, which entered 1997 as one of Britain's biggest and most promising biotechnology ventures, with a market capitalisation of almost £600 million. But since then the shares have slumped from 735p to 317½p.

It has yet to come close to making a profit. Losses were £19 million before tax in 1996 and £11.8 million in 1995.



Trading has been slow even though centres, such as Oxford Street, are crowded

Retailers look to last-minute shoppers

BY MARIANNE CURPHEY

BRITAIN'S retailers are pinning hopes of a recovery in December sales on the last three shopping days before Christmas, amid forecasts that they may be left with up to £3 billion of unsold stock.

Trading in the high street was slower than expected last week and many stores and shops have already begun discounting in an attempt to woo shoppers.

A report published today forecasts spending in the January sales on non-food products to be as high as £6.7 billion, equivalent to 9 per cent more than January 1997.

Shoppers say that much of the £20 billion windfall money from building society conversions has already been spent on large electrical goods and holidays rather than Christmas. The exception is the North East, where the Northern Rock Building Society floated in October and where many of the 900,000 qualifying members received an average £2,000 each.

John Bryson, general manager of the Metro Centre in Gateshead, said: "The average total Christmas spend for every two people has gone up from £55 in September and £70 last Christmas to £97 this year."

The Centre for Economics and Business Research (CEBR) forecast up to £3 billion of stock in the non-food sector would be carried over into the January sales. Douglas McWilliams of the CEBR said that five interest rate rises since May, tax increases and uncertainty on the stock market since the autumn had damped down trading activity.

Pru close to buying Arndale from P&O

BY MARIANNE CURPHEY

PRUDENTIAL Corporation is on the brink of buying the Manchester Arndale Centre, the country's biggest city shopping centre, from P&O for more than £300 million. The deal, which will add Arndale to Prudential's existing £7 billion commercial property portfolio, could be announced today and will be finalised before Christmas.

P&O is in the process of a shake-up instigated by Lord Sterling of Plaistow and Sir Bruce MacPhail, his managing director.

About 85 per cent of Prudential's portfolio is held in the form of stocks and shares, while 5 per cent — or £7 billion — is invested in property.

The insurer, the biggest name in UK life and pensions, already owns the Burlington Arcade in London's Piccadilly and Minister Court in the City of London. It owns 20 shopping centres around the country including the Arndale in Luton.

Both companies declined to comment, but City sources say P&O will announce the sale imminently.

The sale of the Arndale, which was badly damaged in the IRA bomb in Manchester last year, had also attracted interest from Donald Gordon's Capital Shopping Centres, which owns Gateshead's MetroCentre and Lakeside, Thurrock in Essex.

Lord Sterling had originally promised shareholders he would sell a net £300 million of property to reduce P&O's debts. However, the Arndale sale will take the total disposal proceeds to more than £600 million.

Capital poised to tune in to Melody bidding

BY RAYMOND SNODDY, MEDIA EDITOR

CAPITAL, the radio and restaurant group recently thwarted in its attempt to merge with Virgin Radio, is standing by to enter the bidding for Lord Hanson's London radio station Melody FM.

Capital is still waiting anxiously to hear the verdict of Margaret Beckett, President of the Board of Trade, on the Virgin deal even though its plans were torpedoed by Chris Evans and his Ginger Group.

Capital wants to know whether it would have been able to acquire more radio stations in the London area. But it is also anxious to know whether the Monopolies and Mergers Commission accepted its argument that its market in London should be defined as being much broader than just radio.

Capital has already indicated informally to Lord Hanson that it is interested but will not submit an indicative bid until it receives the DTI report.

The report is expected in early January, in good time for the final round of bids for Melody in mid-January. All

the main commercial radio companies are believed to have expressed an interest in Melody, which started out as virtually Lord Hanson's private playlist of easy listening but has long since broadened out into a profitable station specialising in "melodic" popular music.

At the moment Scottish Radio Holdings and Emap are strong contenders, although GWR, owner of Classic FM, is also in the field. NRJ, the French radio group that has so far failed to win a radio licence in the UK is also believed to be interested.

Scottish, in particular, must have an edge. Lord Gordon, the founder of Scottish, although he has stood down from day-to-day operations at the company, helped to set up Melody for Lord Hanson in 1989.

The intense competition and fact that there are no new FM licences on offer for London could drive the price of Melody above £25 million. The sale is part of Lord Hanson's move towards being a focused building materials group.

Energy Group go-ahead opens up power bids

BY CHRISTINE BUCKLEY, INDUSTRIAL CORRESPONDENT

ENERGY groups will this week be positioning themselves for a wave of corporate activity in the sector after last Friday's approval of the £3.6 billion takeover of The Energy Group.

The decision had been keenly awaited, especially by PowerGen, the generator, as an important marker of government policy in energy. With Labour vowing no fears over vertical integration over The Energy Group, which has generating and distribution interests, the approval has been taken as a signal that further integration will be approved.

Pacificorp is expected to

quickly renew its bid for The Energy Group. Market speculation believes it could mount a 730p a share offer, compared with the 690p a share it has already made.

The bid lapsed when the takeover was referred to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission by Margaret Beckett, President of the Board of Trade. Her wholehearted endorsement of the Monopolies and Mergers report, which raised no issues of public interest, comes as the Government is attempting to save the coal industry and determine its long-term future with the electricity generators.

A wave of activity in the electricity industry is expected to be accelerated by the keenness of distribution and supply companies to separate those functions and merge them either with generators or other supply businesses.

They are increasingly looking at such options in an effort to reduce costs as competition in the domestic market begins.

Competition will operate on thin margins and electricity companies will also face national rivals such as British Gas, which is mounting an aggressive campaign to sell electricity.

TUC highlights seasonal exploitation and bad practice

Dickensian bosses blight Christmas

BY PHILIP BASSETT, INDUSTRIAL EDITOR



Monks: demand for fairness

EMPLOYEES across Britain are facing a "bleak" Christmas from bad bosses, the TUC says today.

While the TUC says that many companies in the UK treat their staff fairly, there is a "rough end to life at work in Britain today", with many employees working gruelling hours in dangerous environments, sometimes for poverty wages and often for "bullying" bosses.

The TUC today publishes the results of calls to its recently opened telephone hotline. It offers employees the opportunity in confidence to detail bad practices at work. Of 5,000 calls received, the TUC discloses that a third were from people in white collar jobs, and one in four was a manager or professional, complaining of individual bullying bosses and "exploitative" corporate policies. Bullying topped the list of

complaints, with four in ten calls relating to bullying at work — half of them from men. Cases included staff being made to stand in the corner of an office wearing a dunce's hat, throwing things at employees and direct sexual harassment of women.

A quarter of all calls complained of low pay. Some said they were earning as little as £1 an hour, and more than two in five are earning £2.50 an hour or less. Cases include a Liverpool security guard working 12-hour shifts for £2.97 an hour; his worksite charges 12p for a teabag.

Another key area of complaint was changes to contracts, with one firm cited as "cancelling" Christmas, only allowing staff to take Christmas Day and Boxing Day off as part of their annual leave entitlement. A security guard is getting his first Christmas holiday in six years.

John Monks, TUC General Secretary, says today: "The technology and the jobs may have changed, but workplace relations can come straight from the pages of Dickens." He says that many of the bad bosses' practices are a legacy of the 1980s: "Job insecurity, increased pressure at work and the widespread perception that the balance of power at work had swung too far in the direction of the bad boss were important ingredients in the Conservatives' election defeat."

The TUC says the "clear demand for fairness at work" has not gone away since the election. The unions, which met Tony Blair last week to discuss a range of issues, believe that some of the abuses will be remedied by legislation, including a minimum wage, union recognition and limits on working time.

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Tales of showmen and their many women

On Saturday night it was still possible to pretend that you know what is not coming. A bit of judicious work with the remote control and you could steer your way through the evening without catching even a glimpse of it. Instead we could concentrate on the serious things in life, such as *Bustle* Berkeley and *Hughie Green*, two men who shared a passion for showbusiness and pretty girls and whose biographical profiles were scheduled, rather deliciously, to run back-to-back on BBC2.

Some of the links were obvious. Despite enjoying their primes some 30 years apart and on opposite sides of the Atlantic, both were deeply rooted in foot-tapping, vaudeville tradition. Berkeley's parents, we learnt in *Going Through the Roof*, an orthodox biography with almost as many co-producers as Berkeley had dancers, were both actors. Green,

on the other hand, according to Paul Merton's narration to the less conventional *The Works: Hughie Green* was the godson of the legendary music-hall comedian Harry Tate. For anybody under the age of 45, that's "legendary" in its rarely used form meaning "never heard of him".

You would have to be under five and/or living in a deep cave, however, not to have heard of his godson over the past fortnight. I wondered how the whole Paula Yates imbroglio would be acknowledged in a film purporting to be about Green's career. It took less than a minute to discover that it wasn't so much being acknowledged by Mike Connolly, the director, as embraced. "The intake of breath nearly sucked the air in," said one, recalling how Noel Botham's extraordinary address was received at Green's already fairly extraordinary-sounding funeral. I wanted to know more

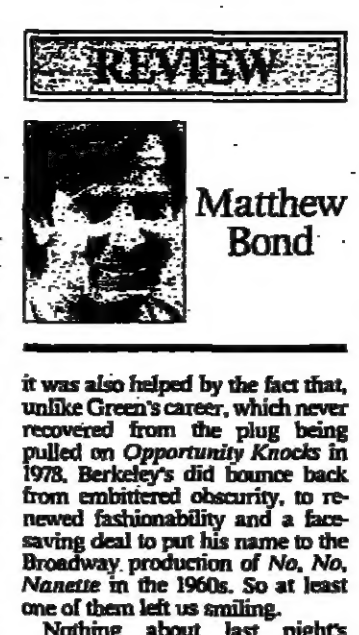
about the vicar who filled in the gaps with gags. Was he guided by the voice of God or the sound of opportunity knocking?

I also wanted to know more about Green than his womanising. Cramming all this controversy into half an hour left little time for the early years of his career when — at about the same time as Berkeley was making *42nd Street* — Green was becoming a theatrical impresario at the age of 12. The legendary Harry Tate had clearly done his godfatherly stuff.

Berkeley's reputation survived its trial by television slightly better, helped by the fact that all his women and heavy drinking happened a long time ago and by the fact that American film historians earnestly discussing the phallic symbolism of his dance routines made me laugh. ... until we got to Carmen Miranda's bananas, anyway. But

it was also helped by the fact that, unlike Green's career, which never recovered from the plug being pulled on *Opportunity Knocks* in 1978, Berkeley's did bounce back from embittered obscurity, to renewed fashionability and a face-saving deal to put his name to the Broadway production of *No, No, Nanette* in the 1960s. So at least one of them left us smiling.

Nothing about last night's



Matthew Bond

Nothing about last night's

- BBC1**
- 8.00am *Business Breakfast* (36513)
 - 9.00 *BBC Breakfast News* (7) (62038)
 - 9.00 *Theatreland* (1974) Choice moments from some of the great musicals. (Part 2 is tomorrow) (6272538)
 - 11.05 *The Traditions of Christmas* Portrait of Charles Dickens (1) (40894)
 - 11.10 *Children's Christmas Awards 1997* Highlights from last month's ceremony (1822398)
 - 12.00 *Land of the Summer Wine* (1) (62551)
 - 12.30 *Spice* *Celebrity Ready, Steady, Cook* (1) (62533)
 - 1.00 *News* (7) and weather (36336)
 - 1.30 *Regional News* (17113754)
 - 1.40 *The Weather Show* (6644613)
 - 1.45 *Neighbours* (7) (40530808)
 - 2.10 *Police* *Crime drama*, with Barry Newman (1) (722358)
 - 3.00 *Vets in Practice* (1) (1203)
 - 3.30 *Playdays* (747622) 3.50 *Enchanted Land* (640551) 4.00 *Notting Hill* (301208) 4.40 *Goosebumps* (655445) 5.00 *Newsround* (1) (442223) 5.10 *Blue Peter* (1) (689071)
 - 5.35 *Neighbours* (7) (757735)
 - 6.00 *News* (7) and weather (445)
 - 6.30 *Regional News* (575)
 - 7.00 *This Is Your Life* Presented by Michael Aspel (1) (6900)
 - 7.30 *Here and Now: Shopping for Free* Chris Choi goes undercover to see how one of Britain's largest shopping centres copes with Christmas shoppers (1) (200)
 - 8.00 *EastEnders* *Peggy's* announcement spells disappointment for Tiffany, while Kathy is the bearer of bad tidings for Pat (1) (256)
 - 8.30 *Children's Hospital: Christmas Special* Andrew Sachs presents: an update on the year's cases, including baby Faith Hampson, born with a diaphragmatic hernia, and Thomas Foster, knocked down while crossing the road (1) (1445)
 - 9.00 *News* (7) and weather (3025)
 - 9.30 *Hotel* *The Adelphi* staff prepare for the annual Beatles Convention; 325 stranded sun-seekers also check in. Last in series (1) (66623)
 - 10.00 *Death Train* (1993) with Pierce Brosnan. A mercenary is hired to transport a nuclear device across Europe and deliver it to Saddam Hussein. Directed by David S. Jackson (1) (61619)
 - 11.40 *Carry On Don't Lose Your Head* (1985) Set-up of the Scarier Pimpal story, with Sid James leading his regular team as an aircraft which rescues victims of the Black Ringmaster to save noblemen from execution during the French Revolution. Directed by Gerald Thomas (1) (287735)
 - 1.05am *The Phantom of Hollywood* (1974) with Jack Cassidy. A masked monster goes on the rampage against high-powered executives who are planning to sell the discredited film studio's cable channel. Directed by Gene Levitt (623548)
 - 2.15 *Weather* (652174)
 - 2.30 *BBC News 24*

- BBC2**
- 7.15am *Teletubbies* (1) (213822) 7.40 *Orville and Cuddles* (1) (584449) 7.45 *Junior Jungle* (1) (584447) 7.50 *Blue Peter* (1) (689071) 8.00 *News* (7) and weather (36336) 8.15 *Blue Peter* (1) (689071) 8.40 *News* (7) and weather (36336) 8.50 *News* (7) and weather (36336) 9.00 *The Adventures of Jonny Quest* (1) (192455) 9.30 *Street View High* (1) (627738) 9.55 *Pingu* (1) (778200) 10.00 *Teletubbies* (1) (213822)
 - 10.30 *The Water Babies* (1978) Live-action and animation adaptation of the classic children's tale. Directed by Lionel Lincoln (1) (20829)
 - 12.00 *A Gift for Heidi* (1958) with Sandy Descher. Children's tale inspired by Johanna Spyri's classic novel (7303948)
 - 1.10pm *The Greasy Sasquatch* (3626280) 1.15 *Hairy Jerry* (3362551) 1.20 *A River Somewhere*. Last in series (2913382) 1.50 *The Natural World* (1) (1) (6857342) 2.40 *News* (7) and weather (36336) 2.45 *Call My Bluff* (62613) 3.15 *Close-Up* with James Stewart (7220377) 3.25 *News* (7) and weather (36336) 3.30 *How the West Was Won* (1962) Epic western starring James Stewart, John Wayne, Gregory Peck, Henry Fonda and Debbie Reynolds. Directed by John Ford, Henry Hathaway and George Marshall (53174)
 - 6.00 *The Simpsons* (7) (881551)
 - 6.20 *Batman Returns* (1) (454808)
 - 7.15 *Close-Up* with James Stewart. Writer, Apollonia Mounin and director David Lynch (1) (72739)
 - 7.30 *A Christmas Carol* Simon Callow as Dickens recalls his immortal creation Mrs Gamp (1) (651)
 - 8.00 *Top Gear: The TVR Story* (1) (3280)
 - 8.30 *The Antiques Show* Christmas Special. Children's toys of days gone by, a guide to table decorations and Christmas cards (1) (8087)

- HTV**
- 6.00am *GMTV* (242336)
 - 9.25 *Treasure Seekers* (14) (1) (1822193)
 - 9.55 *News* (7) and weather (775735)
 - 10.00 *Regional News* (6800193)
 - 10.05 *Murphy's White Christmas* (7784483)
 - 10.30 *Christmas on Division Street* (1981) with Fred Savage and Hume Cronyn. A Christmas story about a young man and an elderly woman. Directed by George Kaczender (97267025)
 - 12.20pm *Regional News* (166716)
 - 12.55 *Dinosaurs* (2117648)
 - 1.30 *Pinky and the Brain* (63532)
 - 2.00 *Alfie in Wonderland* (1951) Disney animated version of Lewis Carroll's adventure (1) (2202975)
 - 3.20 *News* (7) regional news and weather (1862903)
 - 3.35 *Police Academy: It's Their First Assignment* (1985) with Steve Guttenberg and George Kennedy. Lissard takes on six new recruits from the Police Academy to beat the criminals in his precinct. Directed by Jerry Paris (1) (3222393)
 - 5.05 *Talking Telephone Numbers* (3945261)
 - 5.40 *News* (7) and weather (857613)
 - 6.00 *The Baldy Man* (704938)
 - 6.25 *Regional Weather* (680919)
 - 6.30 *Wales Tonight* (7) and weather (193)
 - 7.00 *Michael Barrymore's Strife* (1) (8356)
 - 7.30 *Coronation Street* Chris plays the Good Samaritan (1) (877)

- CENTRAL**
- As HTV West except:
 - 12.55pm-1.30 *Surprise Chets* (2117648)
 - 6.00 *24 Hours* (613)
 - 6.30-7.00 *Central News* (193)
 - 1.35pm *Football Extra* (685323)
 - 2.35 *Film: Sordid of the Valley* (1983). A fantasy adventure starring Miles O'Keefe, Sean Connery and Trevor Howard. Directed by Stephen Weeks (135149)
 - 4.30 *Film: Mr. Mugsy Hides Again* (1945). A comedy starring comedy director by Wallace Fox (5015388)
 - 5.25 *Cybernet* (5333858)
- As HTV West except:**
- 12.20pm-12.30 *Illuminations* (166716)
 - 12.55-1.30 *The EN Who Saved Christmas* (2117648)
 - 6.00-7.00 *Westcountry Live* (32280)
- As HTV West except:**
- 12.55-1.30 *Shortland Street* (2117648)
 - 6.00 *Merton Tonight* (613)
 - 6.30-7.00 *Seven Days Special* (193)
 - 3.05 *Film: Tom Horn* (823236)
 - 5.00am *Look and Cook* (17656)
- As HTV West except:**
- 12.55-1.30 *What's My Line?* (2117648)
 - 6.25 *Anglia Weather* (680919)
 - 6.30-7.00 *Anglia News* (193)

- CHANNEL 4**
- 6.00am *Sesame Street* (24551) 7.00 *The Baby's Club* (1) (1) (6253174) 7.30 *Two Stupid Dogs* (6389439) 8.00 *The Big Breakfast* (51782) 10.00 *Zig and Zag's Big Morning* (6808735) 10.01 *Happy Days* (1) (4201857) 10.35 *The Secret World of Alex Mack* (1) (434174) 11.05 *Moesha* (1) (457532) 11.30 *The Monkees* (4700) 12.00 *Earle, Indiana* (1) (5261)
 - 12.30pm *Light Lunch* (1) (1) (65829)
 - 1.30 *Frances Bessell's West Country Christmas* Vegetable terrine (1) (81174)
 - 2.00 *The Homecoming* (1971) with Patricia Neal and Richard Thomas. The family film which served as a pilot for *The Waltons*. Directed by Fielder Cook (1) (600071)
 - 3.30 *Beaver* *Brunswick* (1954) with Stewart Granger as the Regency dandy and Peter Ustinov as the Prince of Wales. Directed by Curtis Bernhardt (1) (588990)
 - 5.50 *Art and Dee's Georgia Christmas* Festive fun aboard a boat, with guests Peter Andre, Alec Jones and Joe Pasquale (1) (75938)
 - 6.30 *Hollyoaks* Dawn's family aim to give her a very special Christmas. Cindy goes into labour (1) (735)
 - 7.00 *Channel 4 News* (1) (6700)
 - 7.30 *Tom Keating on Painters* The notorious artist and restaurateur what went wrong during his 140 days in space aboard the Russian space station Mir (1) (3377)
 - 8.00 *Pet Rescue Christmas Special* from the RSPCA centre at Great Ayton, Yorkshire (1) (5648)
 - 8.30 *Christmas TV Dinners* Hugh Fearnley-Whittinghall joins the festive preparations for two sumptuous Christmas feasts: a 12-course meal and an open-air feast for 40 prepared in a caravan (1) (7483)

- CHANNEL 5**
- CHANNEL 5 ON SATELLITE**
- Channel 5 is now broadcasting on transponder No 63 on the Astra Satellite. Viewers with a Videocrypt decoder will be able to receive the channel free of charge. Frequencies for transponder No 63 picture: 10.5275 GHz; sound: 7.02 and 7.02 MHz.
- 6.00am *5 News Early* (4127483)
 - 7.30 *WorldWide: Fragile Planet* Woodland that has existed for hundreds of years (4650782)
 - 8.00 *Havelland* (1) (8750349) 8.30 *Adventures of the Bush Patrol* (3605290) 9.00 *Expresso* (1) (761735)
 - 10.00 *Hospital Live* Update. Kristy Young reveals how young patients who received treatment earlier this year at Guy's Hospital kidney unit (5201434)
 - 11.00 *Loose* (3245396) 11.30 *Double Espresso* (5001887) 12.00 *The Bold and the Beautiful* (1) (5500282)
 - 12.30pm *Family Affairs* (1) (1427532)
 - 1.00 *5 News Update* (8758822) 1.05 *Sunset Beach* (1) (4010754) 2.00 *5's Company* (3215332)
 - 3.30 *One Christmas* (1965) with Henry Winkler, T.J. Lowther and Katharine Hepburn. A young boy spends Christmas with the drunken father he's never met. Directed by Tony Bill (5414648)
 - 5.20 *5's Company - Late Extra* (5677629)
 - 5.30 *Whistle* (4683396)
 - 6.00 *100 Per Cent* (4680209)

- PARAMOUNT COMEDY**
- 7.00pm *Gracie Under Fire* (7703) 7.30 *Space Jam* 12.30pm *Space Jam* 1.00 *Space Jam* 1.30 *Space Jam* 2.00 *Space Jam* 2.30 *Space Jam* 3.00 *Space Jam* 3.30 *Space Jam* 4.00 *Space Jam* 4.30 *Space Jam* 5.00 *Space Jam* 5.30 *Space Jam* 6.00 *Space Jam* 6.30 *Space Jam* 7.00 *Space Jam* 7.30 *Space Jam* 8.00 *Space Jam* 8.30 *Space Jam* 9.00 *Space Jam* 9.30 *Space Jam* 10.00 *Space Jam* 10.30 *Space Jam* 11.00 *Space Jam* 11.30 *Space Jam* 12.00 *Space Jam* 12.30 *Space Jam* 1.00 *Space Jam* 1.30 *Space Jam* 2.00 *Space Jam* 2.30 *Space Jam* 3.00 *Space Jam* 3.30 *Space Jam* 4.00 *Space Jam* 4.30 *Space Jam* 5.00 *Space Jam* 5.30 *Space Jam* 6.00 *Space Jam* 6.30 *Space Jam* 7.00 *Space Jam* 7.30 *Space Jam* 8.00 *Space Jam* 8.30 *Space Jam* 9.00 *Space Jam* 9.30 *Space Jam* 10.00 *Space Jam* 10.30 *Space Jam* 11.00 *Space Jam* 11.30 *Space Jam* 12.00 *Space Jam* 12.30 *Space Jam* 1.00 *Space Jam* 1.30 *Space Jam* 2.00 *Space Jam* 2.30 *Space Jam* 3.00 *Space Jam* 3.30 *Space 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ROGER BOOTLE 45

Looking back at the year of the bull — or mouse

BUSINESS EDITOR Patience Wheatcroft

MONDAY DECEMBER 22 1997

LANDING 46

Julius brings the real world to Bank of England



Rising level of pay deals adds to interest rate worries

By Philip Bassett
INDUSTRIAL EDITOR

WAGE settlements in Britain are accelerating rapidly, according to industry evidence published today, raising fears of increasing inflation and a further rise in interest rates.

But in advance of that, the latest reports from the CBI's pay databank showing increasing wage settlements will prompt concern in business, the City and Whitehall of consequent pressure on inflation, and of the subsequent need for a

rise in earnings as pre-Christmas bonuses — especially in the City — feed through into the average earnings index, pushing it up from the stable level shown in official figures last week.

But a third of manufacturers say their inability to raise prices in tough competitive markets is helping to keep down pay deals, while low profit levels are also a downward pressure in one in four deals.

settlement levels, and reports from business of widespread if patchy skill shortages are reflected in 20 per cent of manufacturing firms emphasising the need to recruit and retain staff as a factor pushing up pay deals.

The databank shows that in services, wage settlements in the three months to November averaged 4.4 per cent — significantly up on the 3.9 per cent in the previous quarter, and on the same period last year. While CBI leaders say

there is a "wide variation" in service sector pay awards, with more than a third of deals still in the 2.5-3.5 per cent pay band, other deals are coming in higher, with 17 per cent in the 4.5-5.5 per cent range, and 13 per cent at more than 5.5 per cent.

The CBI suggests that the rises largely reflect the buoyancy of the business services sector in areas such as financial services and information technology. The rise in

pay deals is pushing down productivity growth, the CBI shows, with manufacturing productivity falling from 3.1 to 2.9 per cent, and forecast productivity growth falling too.

Kate Barker, CBI chief economist, said business was concerned about rising pay deals, though the CBI still wants interest rates to be kept on hold. She said the labour market was "behaving a good deal better than it was last time round at this stage in the cycle".

The Government is braced for a

IMF reduces forecast for world growth

FROM OLIVER AUGUST IN NEW YORK

THE International Monetary Fund yesterday predicted doom and gloom for the world economy in the light of the Asian financial crisis and revised its worldwide economic growth forecast for 1998 downwards from 4.3 per cent to 3.5 per cent.

According to the IMF, the so-called "Asian contagion" will worsen in months to come. In its interim *World Economic Outlook*, it greatly reduced growth forecasts for the region. Thailand, Indonesia, Malaysia and the Philippines are now expected to grow 1.7 per cent on average rather than the previous forecast of 3.7 per cent. South Korea was adjusted to 2.5 per cent, down from 6 per cent. The Japanese growth forecast was almost halved to 1.1 per cent.

Western countries will not escape the fallout from this worsening situation, said Michael Mussa, the IMF chief economist. Economic growth

will slow down significantly in the US and the US trade deficit is expected to increase by 29 per cent to \$230 billion (£140 billion).

The 1998 growth forecast for the US was cut from 2.4 per cent to 1.4 per cent. This year the US economy grew 3.8 per cent. Britain and the rest of Europe will see its growth slow down by only 0.1 per cent to 2.7 per cent because it is less dependent on Asian trade.

The report said: "The repercussions in regional and global financial markets have proven much deeper and more extensive than seemed likely only a few months ago. The economic implications can now be expected to be more serious."

In the wake of the recent bank failures, mass bankruptcies, currency crises and stock market plunges, the IMF is expecting a wave of unemployment in Asia, which had enjoyed continuous economic

growth for over 20 years. Mr Mussa said: "The type of slowdowns we are going to see in South-East Asia will be decidedly negative. Undoubtedly, people will feel the pain of adjustment." Some economists predict that one million people will lose their jobs in South Korea alone.

The IMF gave warning that its revised forecasts could still be too optimistic. The report is based on the assumption that the Asian economies will rebound in late 1998, after the same pattern as the Mexican crisis in 1995. Growth took off again there in 1996 after a deep but brief recession.

To follow this example, the Asian governments would have to implement the right policies, Mr Mussa said. There was still a risk that they would delay painful reform measures such as raising interest rates to support their currencies and restrain domestic demand to reduce trade deficits.

He said: "The major source of uncertainty is how long this turmoil will go on for and whether additional countries will get pulled in."

He told investors not to be deceived by the extraordinarily good performance of world stock markets over the past few years. He said: "When economic conditions remain generally good and when private foreign capital is flowing at a record pace and on very attractive terms, it is easy to believe that the good times will continue."



Forward looking: Martin Taylor, left, and Andrew Buxton, chairman, expect banking marriages between "consenting adults"

Banks to consolidate, says Taylor

By Richard Miles, Banking Correspondent

BARCLAYS BANK has put on hold its ambitious plan for a £37 billion merger with NatWest, its high street rival, after its initial approach was soundly rejected.

And persistent speculation that Barclays may launch a hostile bid, Martin Taylor, chief executive, has told *The Times* that the marriage of two large banks has to be between "consenting adults".

Mr Taylor acknowledged that NatWest's senior management had "given no sign of being interested in the idea" of a merger to create the

UK's biggest clearing bank, but added that "there were other fish in the sea".

Nevertheless, the Barclays chief executive remains convinced of the business sense behind such a deal. Merging the two banks' high street operations would result in considerable cost savings and give the new group critical mass in a market "throbbling" with new entrants.

Nor does Mr Taylor believe that competition obstacles to a merger with NatWest would be insurmountable, even though the combined banks

would claim nearly one in two personal bank accounts and more than 50 per cent of the business banking market.

"The Government has been quite happy to see new banks created, so it should expect to see some go. I have never believed in national champions, but I believe in promoting efficiency by having the right size of business," he said. "There are far too many banks in Europe. When the euro comes, there will be a single European payments system and that's going to drive a single European banking sys-

tem. That in turn will drive considerable consolidation."

Mr Taylor believes the £35 billion merger of Union Bank of Switzerland and Swiss Bank Corporation, announced a fortnight ago, marks the start of a wave of rationalisation across the continent.

NatWest, whose chairman Lord Alexander of Weedon is said to be under pressure from institutions to step down early, has rejected two other merger approaches this year, from Abbey National, the former building society, and Prudential, the UK's biggest insurer.

De Beers gloomy over prospects

By Jon Ashworth

DE BEERS, the South African group that dominates world trade in uncut diamonds, is expected to paint a gloomy picture of prospects when it releases 1997 sales figures today.

Publication of the figures was put back from last Thursday — prompting fears in the market that some unexpected setback has emerged. Outlook for 1998 is thought to be giving cause for concern.

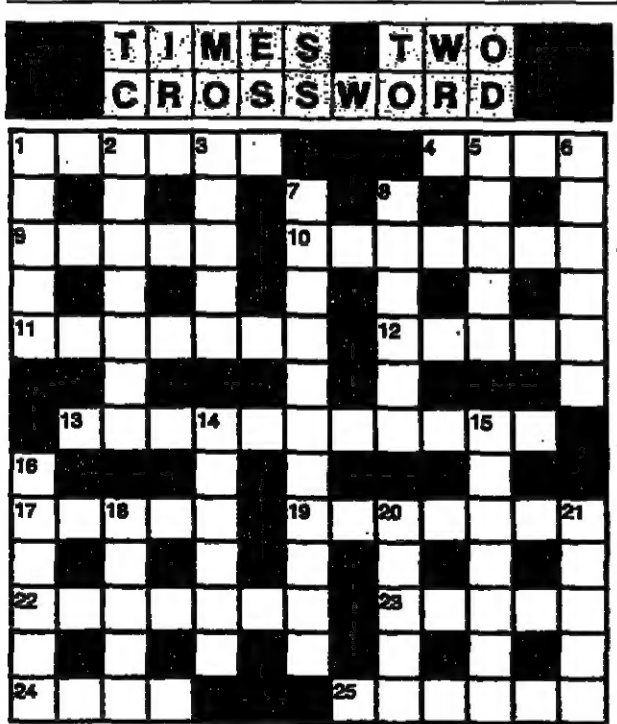
Financial turmoil in South-East Asia — principally Thailand and South Korea — is taking its toll of luxury goods sales.

Analysts forecast 1997 De Beers diamond sales of about \$4.6 billion — well below last year's record \$4.8 billion. The figures will mark the debut for the new De Beers management team, led by Nicky Oppenheimer and Gary Ralfe, who assume the posts of chairman and managing director respectively of De Beers from January 1.

They move across from the equivalent roles at the Central Selling Organisation (CSO), the De Beers controlled marketing cartel that manages the supply of most of the world's uncut diamonds.

The CSO reported sales of \$2.88 billion in the first half of 1997, a rise of 4.8 per cent on the same period last year. America, which accounts for about a third of world retail jewellery sales, was experiencing growth of about 7 per cent.

Japan, with 28 per cent of the market, was flat, and banking collapses and financial strife are likely to have further dampened demand. De Beers says prospects hinge heavily on an improvement in the Japanese market.



No 1283

ACROSS

- 1 Relief road (6)
- 4 First OT prophet (alpha order) (4)
- 9 Firework; lampoon (5)
- 10 Atomic pile (7)
- 11 Bedding plant; may give Abel oil (7)
- 12 Ruined, reversed (5)
- 13 Trustworthiness (11)
- 17 Parrot name; his history, H G Wells (5)
- 19 Pool (for scooping) (7)
- 22 One in responsible post (7)
- 23 County (abbr); sort of fizz (5)
- 24 Up-and-down toy (2-2)
- 25 Defective (6)

DOWN

- 1 A herb; a saint (5)
- 2 Fixer of leaks (7)
- 3 Ancient seeress (5)
- 5 Quietened (5)
- 6 Length of pace (6)
- 7 First G&S/D'Oyley-Carte piece (5,2,4)
- 8 Instruction book (6)
- 14 Solid carbon dioxide (3,3)
- 15 Of current interest (7)
- 16 Uncanny; ghostlike (6)
- 18 Exalted (5)
- 20 Hooded snake (5)
- 21 Short-tempered (5)

SOLUTION TO NO 1282

ACROSS: 1 Sift 3 Labrador 9 Eerie 10 Fanatic 11 Pointer 12 Wick 14 Slight 16 Plough 18 Jazz 19 Hanover 22 Initial 23 Cello 24 Sanctity 25 Read DOWN: 1 Sheepish 2 Fortification 4 Afford 5 Renewal 6 De Tocqueville 7 Ruck 8 Vent 13 Sherwood 15 Hazlitt 17 Chale 20 Neck 21 Bias

SOLUTION TO THE TIMES TWO CHRISTMAS JUMBO 1997

ACROSS: 1 Such stuff as dreams are made on 15 Invert sugar 16 Pollution 17 Set to 18 Arrange 19 Replenish 20 Variation 21 Dude ranch 22 George Medal 23 Abeam 24 Odds-on 26 Harlequin 28 Richelieu 32 Impostor 33 Ungovernable 35 Media 37 Hard-boiled egg 39 Risen 41 Serpent 42 Charlot 43 Slight 44 Stern foremost 46 Aside 47 Interrogator 49 Pro forma 52 Contained 55 Tunesmiths 56 Caress 58 Macon 60 Russophiles 62 Loathsome 64 Demilasse 65 Ashlaring 67 Edified 68 Euler 69 Institute 70 Spanish Main 71 As plain as the nose on one's face

DOWN: 1 Spit and polish 2 Covered 3 Strongrooms 4 Unseeing 5 Figurehead 6 Strip 7 Ripieno 8 All his geese are swans 9 Southampton 10 Reinvasion 11 Mongrel 12 Disparage 13 Outline 14 Somnambulant 22 Gutenberg 25 Deportation 27 Brought down the house 35 Chessboard 30 In due course 31 Corinthian 34 Banana 35 Morse 36 Bedsit 38 Bride 40 Suetonius 42 Chancel 45 Transcendence 48 Rationalist 50 Flashlights 51 Wholegrain 53 Au naturel 54 Dyspepsia 57 Valerian 59 Cumulus 60 Rossini 61 Llanero 63 Okinawa 66 Issue

Restructuring takes off at BAA

By Jon Ashworth

BAA, the airports operator, has embarked on a wide-ranging management restructuring with a view to shifting management power to the core BAA businesses.

The group is being reorganised into self-standing companies, based around airports, duty-free, property, international and a fledgling railway business. The BAA management committee has been replaced with a new executive committee, which will oversee the delegation of authority down the line.

BAA has been dogged by disappointing stock market performance, and is intent on

delivering increased shareholder value. Sir John Egan, who steps down as BAA chief executive in 1999, said the changes would give BAA room to pursue different options. The group has diversified significantly, and it was appropriate to change the way the company was managed.

Sir John said: "Previously, the management committee took every decision of importance. We've broken it down into a number of companies, with the delegated authority that the board used to give me."

Issues facing BAA include the strength of the pound, which is taking its toll of

spending at Heathrow. The slump was reflected in flat recent financial results. Sir John said: "I don't think right now the City, in a very frothy moment, is taking any prisoners. Our underlying performance is more or less standard."

He added: "The only long-term warning signal is that sterling is typically strong, and we are fundamentally selling to foreigners going home. We've got to be competitive. On the other hand, we've got pretty strong traffic growth — lots of people going on holiday. You never get it fully for you at the same time."

BAA is building a high-speed rail link between Heathrow and Paddington, and says railways could develop into a new operational division. Sir John said: "Once we've got the infrastructure in underneath Heathrow, it could become a very successful railway hub. We're looking at other places to run our trains to, as well. It could quite easily be that it becomes a core part of our business."

There has been speculation that BAA might look to float off its highly profitable retail operations.

Corporate profile, page 44

This week in THE TIMES



TOMORROW Did Roger Levitt, above, begin his career at Barlow Clowes, Slater Walker or Marks & Spencer? Our wicker Christmas Quiz will test your memory.

Saturday Michael Clark, stock market writer of the year, reviews the year's highs and lows. Carl Morfitt, *Temper* editor, assesses the 1997 share portfolio.

Launch of Virgin One account postponed

By Marianne Curphey

VIRGIN DIRECT, part of Richard Branson's Virgin empire, has postponed the launch of its Virgin One account to the public after seeing how Tesco was overwhelmed by demand for its high-interest savings account.

An advertising blitz was originally planned to accompany the launch of its new current account mortgage to non-Virgin customers in the new year. However, that launch has been put off while the company tests its call centre and administrative

back-up. The product is unlikely to be rolled out publicly before the summer, although existing Virgin customers and those who have already inquired about Virgin One will be able to open an account.

Virgin is attempting to learn from the mistakes of other financial services providers. Including Tesco, which was forced to apologise to customers who waited weeks before their new savings account applications were processed. Last month Royal Bank of Scotland, which is running the savings account with Tesco, took the unusual step of apologising to customers whose applications had been delayed because of administrative troubles.

Dr George Mathewson, RBS chief executive, said Tesco had received 40,000 applications in five months. Martin Campbell, Virgin Direct product development manager, said: "We want to be sure we are ready and that we can meet the expected demand. We are trying to

learn from the mistakes of other companies, which were unprepared for the huge popularity of their new products."

Existing customers have already signed up. Those people who are not customers but who have telephoned to express an interest in Virgin One are being offered the account from the beginning of January. However, we do not want to launch a full-scale advertising campaign to everyone else until we know we are ready."

So far the majority of applications for the Virgin One account, which combines a savings account with a flexible mortgage, have been from people in the 35 to 40 age group. About 10,000 people have already called to express an interest in the account.

Bulgaria in Crisis

Appeal to Times Readers

LEFT TO FREEZE

Yordan, 14, already malnourished could die from cold and hunger this winter unless aid reaches him now. With temperatures plummeting Yordan's scant clothing and no shelter offer him little protection from the bitter cold and there is no money to heat his orphanage. There are 37,000 places in Bulgaria's orphanages.



Cold weather alert - 8°C yesterday

No Money To Feed The Children No Money To Heat The Orphanages

Bulgaria is a country in the midst of a serious economic crisis. Now thousands of children are suffering terribly as Siberian temperatures hit the country. Urgent help is needed. There is little money to heat the orphanages.

Orphanage Directors are having to beg for food from local villages and rarely know where the next meal is coming from. In some areas children, like Yordan, are going hungry and the cold could prove fatal for many children this winter. Without aid this could be catastrophic for Bulgaria's orphanage children.

The European Children's Trust, sister charity of The Romanian Orphanage Trust, is ready to distribute emergency food packs, clothes and fuel to the orphanages in most need. Your gift today will save lives and bring hope.

£25 could buy enough emergency food packs to feed 20 orphanage children for 4 weeks we heat an orphanage for 2 days.

Please send whatever you can to help children survive the winter or call 01273 299399 NOW

I enclose £ to save Bulgarian orphanage children. Cheques to The European Children's Trust. Or debit my Access/Visa/CAF card

Card no. _____ Expiry date _____

Signature _____ Date _____

Mr/Ms/Miss/Ms _____

Address _____

Postcode _____

Telephone no. _____

Return to: Tanya Buzova, (T11) Bulgarian Emergency Appeal, The European Children's Trust, FREEPOST KE2839, 644 Queen Street, LONDON, EC4A 4AR or call 01273 299399 NOW. Registered Charity No. 1048737

Please act NOW - winter is here

سكان العالم